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A Monthly Magazine

OF

LIGHT AND AMUSING LITERATURE

FOR

THE HOURS OF RELAXATION.

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LONDON SOCIETY.

JANUARY, 1896.

A Modern Comedy of Errors.

By DARLEY DALE,

Author of "THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH," "THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT," etc.

"Why here begins his morning story right ;
These two Antipholuses, these two so like."

Comedy of Errors.

CHAPTER I.

CALM WEATHER.

IT was a calm, chill, October day. The trees, with their autumn tints of red and yellow, and russet brown and gold, were doing their best to enliven the scene ; but the hedges were so closely clipped, that they could not do much to second the efforts of the trees, though here and there a maple-bush asserted itself, in pronounced shades of red and yellow.

The harvest was all gathered in, and the yellow stacks of corn, some in process of being thatched, were the only objects of interest the stubble-fields offered to the passers-by ; except the rooks and an occasional pheasant or two, and now and then a covey of partridges.

Eastfolk is an agricultural county, the land of which is very highly farmed ; but it is flat and monotonous to travel through, which, perhaps, was the reason Mr. Paul Dursley, F.R.C.S., who was driving in a high dog-cart along one of its straight roads, paid no heed to the scenery, but concentrated his attention on the cigar he was smoking and the mare he was driving.

The mare flew along the flat road, occasionally shaking her pretty head, also occasionally shying, for she was a thoroughbred and very nervous ; but she knew her master's voice, and his '*Tiens donc, Paris! Sois tranquille, ma fille,*' always steadied her.

He always spoke French to Paris, whom he had bought of a French friend and named after the city in which he had spent some very happy years before the death of his father ; it kept up

his French he was wont to say, but he really spoke that language excellently, and knew that he did.

He was a country doctor ; and as he entered the little town in which the Dursleys for several generations had lived, he threw away his cigar, because Dorothy, his sister and housekeeper, said it was unprofessional to smoke on his rounds ; but he was a great smoker, and could not deny himself a cigar on his homeward journey. A few minutes later, the mare turned into a stable-yard off the High Street and stopped at a door, in a high wall, which led into Mr. Dursley's garden.

There was no drive up to the house, but the garden was charming, and burst upon you as a pleasant surprise when you opened the door, for, except in the depth of winter, it was always a blaze of colour.

A diminutive boy in buttons, who rejoiced in the name of Fly, jumped out of the dog-cart and, clashing the stable-bell for the groom, went to Paris's head while his master entered the house.

"Why could not you have brought her round yourself for once ?" said the groom, who was dining, to Fly.

"Why can't the sun shine o' nights for once ?" retorted Fly.

"Don't know, you imp of Satan," politely replied the groom.

"Then I'll learn you. 'Cause 't ain't the sun's work ; and 't ain't mine to bring round your horses. I never asks you to take round our medicines, 'cause I know you ain't equal to it," said Fly, who had a feminine love of the last word.

While these amenities were passing in the stable-yard, Paul Dursley lunched, and his sister waited on him and listened to what he chose to tell her about his patients ; she never asked any questions, that was unprofessional, and Miss Dursley was nothing if not professional.

"Any messages ?" asked the doctor.

"Only one ; but it is an eight-mile journey, and new patients ; so I don't suppose you'll go."

"Not if I know it. Who is it ?"

"Sir John Dane, of Bilney Hall ; do you know who he is ?"

"Yes ; an old Indian judge. He rents Bilney. Liver, of course ; what the dickens made him send for me ? He is only two miles from Eastwich, where there are as many doctors as patients."

"I, too, wondered at that. Surely, Paul, he can't be confusing you with Peter."

Dr. Peter Dursley was Paul Dursley's twin brother, a fashionable London doctor, one of the most rising men in the profession, whose speciality was the heart.

"Not unless he is in his dotage," said Paul.

"I don't know about that. You are just as clever as Peter, and might be as famous if you liked."

"Not at present, Dorothy. Peter's career is being built up on the ruins of domestic happiness ; it is the best of foundations, but not one I wish to lay."

"Ah ! Paul, that is all very grand ; but the truth is, Peter works hard and loves his profession," said Miss Dursley.

"And I am lazy. True, oh Dorothy ! By-the-way, I believe I have heard Sir John Dane has quarrelled with every doctor in Eastwich. He is a violent temper, I understand. I like violent tempers, they amuse me. I'll go and see him. I wonder if he'll quarrel with me. I'll ride over this afternoon."

It was the most momentous decision he ever made in his life ; yet it was made, as such decisions often are, in the most careless way. The thread of destiny is fine as a spider's web, the slightest puff of wind may sway it ; and strong as death, Samson himself could not break it.

"I am glad you are going, perhaps he'll be a good patient ; our income will bear increasing. Is there any medicine for me to make up ?" said Miss Dursley.

"There is the list ; there are no new prescriptions to-day."

Mr. Dursley had a surgery, and dispensed his own medicines in the old-fashioned way ; or rather, his sister did it for him, for there was no reliable chemist in Lyneham, and had he given up the custom, as he often threatened to do, all the Lyneham people and many of the surrounding villages would have had to send to Eastwich for their medicines.

He knew he could trust Dorothy implicitly ; she had done his dispensing for him for the last seven years, and he had never known her to make the slightest mistake ; and yet, for all that, she had not the least knowledge of the effects of the drugs she dispensed, but as she laboured under the impression that an overdose of tincture of orange might have fatal consequences, her ignorance only made her more careful.

Dorothy Dursley was born a century too late ; her chances of happiness were, therefore, far greater than if she had been

born before the world was ripe for her, a century too soon—for she was an intensely domestic woman, with a genius for making preserves, and distilling essences. She had also a talent for gardening, and lived a great deal in the open air, rarely sitting down till the evening, when she did needlework.

She was not given to reading, and was shrewd rather than intellectual. Paul read a great deal and talked to her about what he read, so she was not allowed to rust.

She was a tall woman, strong, healthy, fair and florid ; she had flaxen hair, a remarkably sympathetic voice, and a pretty laugh ; for the rest, she was neither plain nor handsome ; she had a good figure, but dressed badly ; she did not care in the least for appearances, so did not do herself justice.

As for her age, there was no use in her attempting to disguise it, had she been so minded, for all Lyneham knew it ; she was thirty-five, a year younger than her twin brothers.

She was an optimist, always looking on the bright side of life ; a sweet, womanly woman was Dorothy Dursley, who would have been miserable had she not had some man to whom to sacrifice herself. The fates had decreed that that man should be her brother, Paul, for whose sake she was still Dorothy Dursley.

Her twin brothers were better looking than she was, and though very different in character, they were remarkably alike in personal appearance.

Partly on this account and partly from laziness, Paul Dursley wore a clipped beard and moustache, while the great doctor was clean shaven. The brothers had been delicate children, difficult to rear, and now, though they were rather above the average height, and well-built, and well-proportioned, they were not so robust as Dorothy ; they were rather highly wrought, nervous temperaments, whereas their sister was wont to say of herself that she thanked God that she had not a nerve in her body.

The brothers were fair men of the Saxon type, with remarkably blue eyes, and a keen, intellectual expression. Paul added to this a humorous twinkle, and looked as if life, on the whole, was very agreeable to him, though, sometimes, it was rather an exertion to live it.

He had never been to Bilney Hall, where his new patient, Sir John Dane, had lived for the last seven or eight years. He found it was a large, gloomy, square house, built of grey stone,

and standing in somewhat extensive grounds ; but a most depressing-looking place, dull, ugly and commonplace.

The door was opened by a black manservant in plain clothes. The entrance-hall was a decided improvement on the outside of the house ; it was carpeted with tiger and leopard skins ; cases of stuffed animals and birds, and of butterflies and beetles, covered the walls ; antlers of various kinds of Indian deer and buffaloes' horns hung from every available point ; stuffed jaguars and pumas glanced viciously at you from uncanny corners, and it was very evident that the late judge had been a great sportsman.

Indian dhurries hung as *portières* over the massive oak doors, and there was a beautiful old oak staircase with a handsome balustrade and a gallery all round the top of the hall. Paul was shown into a room containing as many trophies of sport as the hall, with the addition of book-cases, comfortable chairs and a writing-table. A fire was burning cheerfully, and in front of it sat a small, elderly man, with grey hair and moustache, and a very dark complexion, browned by Indian suns, and yellow with Indian fever ; but brightened by a pair of fierce, black eyes which shone like fire. He was surrounded by three of his daughters, whose big persons seemed to fill up the by no means small room. Paul's professional eye rested at once on his patient, who he saw at a glance was seriously ill. It was not till later that he grasped the salient points of the three Misses Dane.

They were all very tall, but they were like the three degrees of comparison ; Bertha, the youngest, was tall, Constance was taller, Augusta, the eldest, was the tallest ; she was six feet in her shoes. They were all sandy—Augusta was the sandiest ; they were all freckled—Augusta, the most freckled. They were all very neat—Augusta was the neatest ; they were all prudish—Augusta, the greatest prude ; they were all very busy women—Augusta, the busiest.

They were not what one would call attractive girls, but they had their virtues. Augusta was famed for her love of order, punctuality and neatness ; she was the pink of perfection in all these qualities. As the clock struck the appointed hour, Augusta was always in her appointed place ; whether it were the dinner-table, church, or a mothers' meeting, she was never a second late. Her speech was slow, measured and most correct. She rarely lapsed into colloquialisms ; the poor people were wont

to say she spoke like a book. It would have been interesting to know to what book they referred, but they preferred to generalise.

Constance's great virtue was an exceedingly doubtful one ; she was noted for an aggressive cheerfulness. Her ideal woman was a being always, everywhere, at all times, under all circumstances, cheerful ; so she cultivated this virtuous vice most assiduously. There was always a smirk on her face ; her attitude was ever one of self-conscious cheerfulness ; her manner that of one perfectly content with herself and her surroundings, coloured with a gentle upbraiding of all those on whom the cares of life pressed more heavily than on herself.

Her cheerfulness bore the same relation to the real virtue which springs from a nature overflowing with love and happiness as sand bears to gold.

Bertha was the best of the bunch. She was really a very good-hearted girl, very amiable and with a very modest opinion of her own merits, which views her sisters encouraged.

"Mr. Dursley, I believe," said Miss Dane, with a stately bow and calmly measured tones. "We are endeavouring to persuade my father to retire. We think he would be so much more comfortable in bed."

"I don't care a brass farthing what you all think. Here I am and here I mean to stay till bed-time," growled the invalid.

"Oh, father, your room does look so bright and inviting ; there is such a lovely fire up there. I am sure you would feel so happy and comfortable in bed," said Constance in her most sprightly tone.

"I prefer being unhappy and uncomfortable down here. I wish you had ten minutes of my pain, Miss Constance, and you would feel a little less happy, and cheerful, and comfortable than you do now," said Sir John sharply.

Miss Bertha did not venture to offer any suggestion, and Mr. Dursley, after a look at his patient, said :

"I think, sir, you would be better in bed, if you would allow me to help you there."

"I shan't allow anything of the kind. Turn all these women out of the room, and examine me here at once."

This hint drove the three Miss Danes precipitately to the door, which Paul opened for them, and then sat down to listen to Sir John's account of his ailments.

At the conclusion Paul decided the patient must be got to bed somehow. Persuasion failed ; he tried threats.

"Well, all I can say is, sir, if you don't choose to go to bed I must throw up the case. I can't prescribe for you until I see you there."

"Very well, then, throw it up. Go and leave me to die ; the sooner the better for every one concerned. Good day, Mr. Dursley ; you can go the way all the Eastwich doctors have been."

Reluctantly Paul Dursley left the room. He felt interested in the case, and he had no intention of carrying out his threat, so he found his way to the drawing-room, whither his three daughters had fled.

"Is there no one who can persuade him to go to bed ? Has no one any influence over him in these attacks ?" he asked.

"Yes, there is Chloe, our youngest sister ; she may be able to persuade him if she has returned. I will inquire," said Miss Dane.

"Chloe ! Ye gods, what a name ! If she is anything like her sisters there is not much hope of success," thought Paul, picturing to himself a younger, sandier, perchance even taller edition of the Misses Dane.

The next minute he heard a door open, a silvery laugh, and then a fresh young voice crying out :

"Oh ! but nonsense, he must go to bed if the doctor says so. I shall take him upstairs directly."

"Not a bad voice, but she is evidently another strapping woman, who apparently proposes to carry the old man bodily upstairs," thought Dursley.

What means Miss Chloe resorted to Paul did not discover, but ten minutes later Sambo appeared with a grin on his face to say Judge Sahib was in bed, and would Mr. Dursley go upstairs and see him.

Paul went upstairs, hoping to catch a glimpse of this wonderful Chloe, who had such power over her father ; but he was disappointed, the patient was alone, and in the rather long investigation which followed he forgot her existence.

CHAPTER II.

CHLOE !

AFTER all, Paul's curiosity was destined to be gratified before he left the house, for the question arose how Sir John's medicine was to be fetched, and he ordered Chloe to be sent for to settle the matter.

A minute later and there entered the room a little fairy-like creature with short curly hair, black as night, which made a dusky background for a little pale face, lit up by wonderful black eyes, like her father's, only larger and softer. She was dressed in white serge with red ribbons about it, and she advanced smiling to the bed, but what her method of progression was Paul could not decide. It was neither a walk, nor a run, nor a hop, nor a skip, nor a jump. It was nearer dancing than anything, and it was peculiar to Chloe.

"You wicked old thing, refusing to go to bed till I came! What do you want with Chloe now?" she asked, bending over the bed, patting the pillows and kissing her father.

All her actions were quick and unexpected. You never knew what she was going to do next, only, after you had known her five minutes, you were quite sure what she did would be done prettily.

"I want you to send a groom back with Mr. Dursley for my medicine. He dispenses it himself."

"Oh! does he?" said Chloe, clasping her hands and looking Paul down from top to toe.

This was their introduction.

"Quite right, too. I honour him for it. It is the old-fashioned way and the best way; I wish all doctors did. It is much safer," said Sir John.

"I am afraid, after all, I only do it in theory, not in practice. Of course I am responsible for all the medicine sent out from my surgery, but I hardly ever dispense a bottle myself," said Paul.

"Umph! Well, see that whoever does it does not poison me, or he will have to settle accounts with Chloe here; won't he, Chloe?"

"Any one who hurts one of your dear grey hairs—I wonder if my hair will be like yours when I am old, dad?—will have to answer to me," said Chloe, running her pretty little brown fingers through her father's hair, which was almost as curly as her own raven locks.

"I trust I shall never be so unfortunate as to merit Miss Chloe's displeasure," said Paul, who felt fascinated by this little pale creature, with her pretty manners, her brilliant smile, her glowing black eyes, her dusky curls clustering round her small head, and waving bewitchingly over her white forehead.

"I trust not," said Miss Chloe, with mock gravity and a roguish twinkle in her wicked eyes.

"Whom will you send, Chloe?" asked Sir John.

"James! He will be ready in ten minutes, Mr. Dursley," said Chloe, vanishing.

Paul took this as a hint he must be ready to go in ten minutes, and he never felt less inclined to go, but it made it easier for him when Chloe did not re-appear.

Then he rode home, but not, not the same Paul Dursley who had ridden out. Then he was fancy-free. Now he was bewitched, entranced, enslaved. Then he was thinking of nothing in particular, now he was thinking of only one thing, and that thing was Chloe.

He had never seen any one the least like her before. She reminded him of no person, nothing; but yet there were several things that would always remind him of her. A brilliant starlight night would recall her; so would any weird combination of duskiess and brilliancy. Some women make one think of flowers, of roses or lilies or poppies or snowdrops; Chloe made people think of twinkling stars, of flashing diamonds, of a moonlit sea, of black shadows and dazzling lights. Strange that her brilliancy always made one think of night. One always thought of two things in connection with Chloe, splendour and gloom, brilliancy and duskiess. A little witch her father called her, and a witch she was, as Paul Dursley was soon to discover.

So he rode home thinking of Chloe, thinking what a lovely soft quaint name it was, he, who five minutes before he saw her, thought it the most outlandish he had ever heard.

Of course, when he got home, Miss Dursley, though she did not ask, wanted to know all about the Danes, and Paul told her as much as he saw fit. He was an excellent mimic, and he described the scene with Sir John and his three fair daughters to perfection, but somehow he forgot to mention the fourth Miss Dane, and Dorothy Dursley went to bed under the impression that there were only three Miss Danes, and that none of them would ever make of Paul a married man.

The next day as Dursley was going upstairs to Sir John's bedroom, the strains of a violin met his ears, pouring forth a wild melancholy air which ended in a wail just as he reached the landing. Before he had time to knock at the door the violin broke out again, this time into a joyous triumphal march, as of an army returning victorious from battle. He waited till the

riotous music ceased and then he entered the room, where he found Chloe standing in the midst, violin in one hand, bow in the other, in the act of making a very low bow to her father, which bow the demon of coquetry latent in her prompted her to repeat to Paul Dursley as he made some commonplace speech. She was dressed in black, and Paul found she never wore anything but black or white and red flowers or ribbons.

"We are nothing if not musical, are we, father? That's dad's piano, he plays splendidly. Are you musical, Mr. Dursley?" said Chloe.

"I am passionately fond of music, and I know just enough to be aware how bad my own performance is, and how superior the music I have just heard is."

"What is your instrument?"

"My voice. I sing," said Paul.

"Then you must please bring some songs the next time you come; it will amuse father. He is very ill to-day, aren't you, dearest?" said Chloe, leaning anxiously over her father.

"How did you sleep, sir?"

"Chloe will tell you, she sat up with me. I hardly closed my eyes."

"Umph! Then Miss Chloe must go to bed very early to-night," said Paul.

"Who do you suppose is going to sit up with me then? Am I to be left here to die?" said Sir John sharply.

"You have three other daughters," said Paul.

Sir John grinned.

"Constance would kill me with cheerfully reading the book of Psalms; Augusta would wake me solemnly as the clock struck the hour my medicine was due; Bertha would make feeble efforts to convert me in the night watches. It would be my last night on earth if I were left to them."

"Don't, dad; you shan't be left to them," said Chloe, as if soothing a naughty child.

"Is there no servant you can trust to sit up to-night?" asked Paul.

"Not one that I should not kick out of the room before the morning," said Sir John.

"Then I shall ride over to Eastwich for a night-nurse; she will go on duty at ten to-night and come off at nine to-morrow morning," said Paul.

Sir John blustered and protested, but Paul was firm; there must be a nurse, Miss Chloe was much too young to bear broken rest with impunity.

"I had better tell you at once, Sir John, your illness is likely to be a long one, and your recovery depends in a great measure upon yourself. Your heart is weak, and if you excite yourself the consequences may be serious."

"Chloe must be with me in the day-time, then, if I consent to a night nurse," said the patient.

"Yes, but she must go out for two hours every day; it is not good for so young a girl to be in a sick-room all day."

"I am twenty," said Chloe, straightening herself up to her full height.

"Run away, my witch, and let Dursley prescribe for me."

"I am going, but mind this, Mr. Dursley, if you try to separate dad and me, I shall simply *hate* you. We are just all the world to each other, no one else exists for either of us; and if he does not like a nurse I shall sit up with him, no matter what you may say," said Chloe.

"I shall say nothing, I shall simply be obliged to throw up the case," said Paul.

"You odious, odious creature," cried Chloe in a fury, rushing from the room, with her violin, while her father lay chuckling in his bed.

"She is a little devil when roused, but it is over directly; she inherits it from me, I suppose," said Sir John. "She was born and brought up, until she was seven, in India, when I retired; the others were all born and bred in England, perhaps that is the reason they are all like their mother, while Chloe is like me in everything."

"With a difference," thought Paul, wondering if he should see Chloe again that day.

At any rate he was to hear her again, for she took to working off her anger on her violin in the room below, and he could hear her moods passing from anger to tears, and then to smiles, till, when he reached the hall, she had broken into a valse, and through the half-open door he could see her dancing as she played.

"Am I forgiven?" asked Mr. Dursley, pausing on the threshold.

Before Chloe could answer, Miss Dane entered the room from another door, and in her precise, measured tones observed:

"Really, Chloe, your conduct is most incongruous; father lying seriously ill upstairs, and you dancing in this wild way in the room below. It is most unseemly."

"Don't talk about what you don't understand, Augusta," said Chloe haughtily; and then, with a sudden burst of amiability, she turned to Mr. Dursley, and lifting her black eyes to his blue ones said:

"It is I who want forgiving, not you, isn't it?"

"Chloe is positively unmaidenly, I quite blush to hear her," thought Augusta.

"You want taking care of, you don't seem to have any idea of taking care of yourself," said Paul, and turning to Miss Dane, he informed her he was going to send a nurse, as her father's illness was likely to be a long one.

"Ah! well, we must look on the bright side, there are only seven days in each week, and only twenty-four hours in each day; I dare say the time will pass quicker than we imagine," said Constance cheerfully.

"For you perhaps it may, but I should hardly think it will pass so pleasantly for father, suffering as he does," said Chloe, a demon of mockery lurking in those wicked black eyes.

"I think the nurse a very wise step; night-nursing would interfere a great deal with our various avocations, unfit us for our daily duties, and disorganise the whole establishment. Chloe is the only one who has no duties, and Mr. Dursley considers her too young to sit up at night," said Augusta.

"I have one duty at any rate, and that is to look after my father, and that I am going to do to the best of my power," said Chloe.

"Augusta was speaking of our parochial duties, Chloe dear; the schools, and the parish, and the poor prisoners, whose sad hours it is our gladdest privilege to be allowed to enliven," said Constance.

"With psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, sandwiched in between tracts and sermons. Poor prisoners! If ever I am a prisoner, I hope you won't visit me," said Chloe, who was in one of her wicked moods.

"I hope, if ever I am in prison, you'll be charitable enough to visit me, Miss Chloe; your violin would be a charming distraction," said Paul.

"So I will, I promise. 'What fun it would be. Can't you do something dreadfully wicked and get sent there?' said Chloe.

"Chloe! You must be demented," exclaimed Augusta.

"She'll be wiser when she's a little older, won't you, Chloe dear?" said Miss Constance cheerfully.

"Chloe does not mean half she says, Mr. Dursley," said Bertha stolidly, putting down a basket of tracts, on which she had been regaling the inmates of Eastwich gaol that afternoon.

"Chloe means to give Mr. Dursley some tea before he leaves," said Chloe, running to the tea-table, which was just then brought in.

"Now sit down all of you, and I'll wait on you. It is one of Chloe's pleasures, she has not any duties, as Augusta says. Mr. Dursley, if it will make life happier to you, you may hand my sisters the bread-and-butter," said Chloe, as she dispensed the tea, darting about the room like a flash of light, first to one and then to the other.

"Very well, then, Miss Chloe, we will consider it a bargain, if ever I am in prison you are to come and see me. Meanwhile, I should like you to see me in my own home first, so if you will allow me, I will bring my sister, who lives with me, to call on you to-morrow. She would be charmed to know you, and I don't think I ever met any one who did not like Dorothy."

"Oh! I should like her to come very much. Bertha and I will ride over one day and return the visit," said Chloe.

Bertha, Paul subsequently discovered, was Chloe's favourite sister, and more amenable to her wishes than the others. Miss Augusta and Miss Constance did not accept Paul's proposal with cordiality; they did not care to visit, except with the county and the endowed clergy of the neighbourhood.

"What day are you most likely to be at home, yourself?" asked Chloe of Paul.

"Chloe!" exclaimed Miss Augusta in a tone of horror.

"Thursday; it is my vaccination day. I am always at home to tea on Thursdays," said Paul, looking delighted.

"Then we will avoid Thursday. I am sure Miss Dursley would rather have us all to herself; that was why I asked the question, Augusta," said Chloe, making a very low court courtesy to her eldest sister as she drawled out her name, and then picked herself up and rushed upstairs to her father.

Was it why she asked the question ?

Paul did not believe it was ; neither did he believe she would rather go to his house when he was out ; to say she would was only a sop thrown to Augusta and her propriety, with the double purpose of teasing him.

CHAPTER III.

INTRODUCES THE GREAT DOCTOR.

“Fortune in this mortal race,
Builds on thwackings for its base.”—*G. Meredith.*

HE lived in Brook Street. He moved there about seven years before this story opens, at which time he raised his fees from one guinea to two guineas, thereby drawing the line which placed him in the first rank of consulting physicians. For the next five years he prospered fairly well ; but though by no means the most successful they were the happiest years of his life ; perhaps the happiness retarded the success.

Great happiness, however, is not usually of long duration, and at the end of the five years there came a crash, and Peter Dursley said good-bye to great happiness for a long while. He also said good-bye to the wife he idolized, the love of his life, who died somewhat suddenly, leaving him with four young children. At first he seemed stunned, and lost all interest in his work and in everything else ; then he thought he would go for a voyage round the world, and was making arrangements to do this, when he was called in to one of the Royal Family. From that time he roused himself, he gave up his proposed trip, and threw himself heart and soul into his profession.

He could never be happy again, he thought ; he might be famous, he might be successful, in assuaging the sufferings of others he might at least forget his own. He also took a keen interest in politics, for he found distraction necessary for a man who passed as many death sentences in a month as a judge does in four or five years.

His practice increased enormously after his visit to Windsor, and he was now a fashionable doctor, one of the first authorities on all diseases of the heart. “Physician, heal thyself,” says the proverb ; but the great Doctor Dursley, clever as he was, could never entirely cure himself ; his heart was broken, and he had to

live with the pieces ; he was not the first man that has done the same.

He was absurdly like his brother Paul in appearance, with these exceptions, he was clean shaven, and he seldom smiled. His manner, too, was very different from Paul's ; he was very grave, very quiet ; reserved, yet sympathetic ; gentle, yet most decided ; but without any of the vivacity and cordiality that characterised his brother.

He was a good speaker, and the only time that he was roused to any enthusiasm was when speaking at a public meeting ; he was occasionally heard to laugh when with his children, with whom he rarely missed spending half-an-hour, at least, every evening before his dinner. The eldest child, a little girl of eight, he saw more of, as she was allowed to slip into his room whenever he was alone, and was gradually, though unconsciously, filling up a part of the blank her mother's death had left.

The three younger children were boys, and were rarely seen out of the nursery ; when they were old enough they would go to school ; but Nona would never leave her father, whom she already worshipped ; and it was touching to see the way in which she watched for opportunities to snatch five minutes of his society.

She never disturbed him, merely to be in his presence was enough for Nona ; she would sit at his feet with a book or a doll, and make herself scarce at the least sign of a patient or visitor. In this she was abetted by Drummond, the butler, who always gave her time to escape before a patient was announced.

Drummond had a better memory for faces than his master, and was an invaluable servant. He knew at a glance if a patient were a new one, or had been there before, and he exercised a wise discretion in the order in which he showed in patients and other doctors. Silent and apparently as unconscious of his master's affairs as all good servants appear to be, he was really most observant, and had his own views on subjects of which, had he thought about it, Doctor Dursley would have believed him to be profoundly ignorant.

There was one patient of the great doctor's to whom Drummond had a strong aversion ; this was a lady, a widow, not, in Drummond's opinion, so young as she looked, but on the sunny side of thirty, even in his estimation ; she was also pretty, but how much beauty she owed to art, and how much to nature, was

another point on which the great doctor's butler had his views. She was fair with a profusion of bright golden hair, and dark eyes and eyebrows, but neither the hair nor the eyebrows were, in Drummond's opinion, as God made them.

She dressed well and she had a good figure ; she usually arrived in a hansom and dismissed it before entering, from which Drummond argued she was none too well off ; though it was a mystery to him how she could afford so many doctor's fees, when even he could see there was precious little the matter with her, and what there was wrong, he was very sure his master would never cure ; which opinion he confided to Mrs. Drummond on his Sunday out.

Mrs. Halkett, that was the name of Drummond's *bête noire*, had first consulted Dr. Dursley about a year after Mrs. Dursley's death, but she had known him slightly in his wife's life-time. Her visits, at first rare, increased in frequency as time went on, though there was no visible cause for anxiety on the score of her health.

One morning about three weeks after Paul Dursley was first sent for by Sir John Dane, Mrs. Halkett arrived in Brook Street and was shown into the dining-room to amuse herself, as best she might, with papers and periodicals, till her turn came to go in to Dr. Dursley. It arrived at last, but before showing her in to the consulting room Drummond chose to carry some letters to his master. Dr. Dursley glanced at them, threw some aside, and telling Drummond to wait till he rang before announcing the next patient selected two to read at once.

The first was from his brother Paul, giving an account of Sir John Dane's case, and asking what Peter's fee would be if he called him in for a consultation. Sir John wished for him, but was not a rich man, still as Peter would be glad to see his brother and sister, Paul hoped he would name a reasonable sum.

The great doctor considered and named fifty guineas, scrawled a few lines to Paul to that effect, and opened the next letter, which was the offer of a baronetcy from Windsor, to be bestowed at the coming marriage of one of his Royal patients.

Dr. Dursley rose and paced the room two or three times, then he sat down and covered his face with his hands, and thought of the wife who would have rejoiced so at the honour conferred on him ; what was it to him now she was dead ?

A husk, an empty shell, a barren title ; still for all that when

he rose to ring the bell he had decided to accept it. A baronetcy is not to be despised though you have no wife to share it with you ; but the image of his lost love was floating in his brain, when Mrs. Halkett at last made her appearance.

Perhaps that was why Dr. Dursley was rather more reserved, rather less sympathetic in his manner, rather briefer and more decided in his advice, rather less observant and rather more pre-occupied than usual, on this occasion.

Because he was all these things, it behoved Mrs. Halkett to be rather more plaintive, a little more suffering, more confidential, more determined to achieve her object than heretofore.

"You must be out more in the fresh air, Mrs. Halkett; take more exercise, and don't indulge these feelings of depression," said Dr. Dursley, handing her a prescription.

"I try not to do so; but alas, Dr. Dursley, you know as well as I do how hard this loneliness is to bear ; and I was so young too, and I have no children to soothe my lot, nor have I any engrossing occupation to take me out of myself, as you have."

"Try and live for others," said Dr. Dursley.

"I would, had I any one to live for," and the dark eyes were raised appealingly to his, and surely, surely he felt a slight pressure, when the little tightly gloved hand with his fee inside it, rested in his.

He rang the bell promptly, and when the door had closed on Dora Halkett, he whistled a scarcely audible, long, low whistle and muttered to himself, as he stood before the fire with his coat tails under his arm, "That's her game, is it? I never suspected it before. I must be on my guard. Faugh! The woman is daft. And to-morrow is the day I dread. Two years to-morrow since——, two years."

"They are all gone now, father," said a little voice, and a tiny hand was slipped into his, as Nona, who had been on the watch, came in.

Dr. Dursley sat down, took Nona on his knee and told her he had had a letter from the Queen, and she was going to make him a baronet, and he would be called Sir Peter Dursley, and when he was dead, little Paul would be called Sir Paul Dursley.

"And what shall I be called?" said Nona.

"The same as you are now, father's darling."

"Oh! well, it is prettier than 'Sir' after all, but it does not

seem fair, 'cause I am older than Paul," said Nona, whose views on the law of primogeniture were somewhat crude.

"Yes, but Paul will not be Sir Paul till I die, you know. Have you ordered the wreaths? That is right, then to-morrow you shall drive with me to mother's grave, and help me to put them on it."

But when the next day arrived, with it came a telegram from Paul Dursley, "Received letter. All right. Patient worse. Come to-day."

And Dr. Dursley had to go down to Eastfolk by the mid-day train, and leave Nona to go with her grandmother, who lived near him, to his wife's grave, on this the second anniversary of her death.

CHAPTER IV.

BREEZES.

CHLOE was not at home when Miss Dursley, at Paul's request, called on Miss Dane, so she left the house, still under the impression that there were only three Miss Danes, and wondering greatly why on earth Paul wanted her to know three such uninteresting women; he was not usually so anxious for her to be on visiting terms with his patients.

"Well, what do you think of them, Dorothy?" said Paul as they drove home.

"Great plain women; stiff as pokers; pious as tracts; yellow and depressing as London fogs; why in the world did you bring me so far to gain so little as their acquaintance, Paul?"

"Well, the honest truth is, Dorothy, I have fallen head over ears in love with one of the Misses Dane."

"Paul! How can you talk such nonsense?"

"It is the solemn truth, Dorothy; it was love at first sight, and my whole happiness depends on whether she accepts or refuses me," said Paul, very gravely.

Dorothy's answer was to burst into a fit of laughter, between the peals of which she gasped out:

"I beg your pardon, Paul, but—but, which is it?"

"I shan't tell you anything more. I consider your conduct most unsympathetic and unbecoming," said Paul, pretending to be offended.

"I can't help it Paul, I really can't; you of all men; you, so fastidious about women; you, to have lived to thirty-six without seeing a girl you would condescend to look at; you, to fall in love with one of those great strapping, sandy—"

"That will do, Dorothy," interrupted Paul; "if you can't be civil hold your tongue. Of course, I knew you would never approve of my wife, if she were an angel from heaven."

"I beg your pardon; nothing would give me greater pleasure than to see you happily married. I could then go where duty calls me—to take care of Peter and his children. Well, certainly love is a mystery, one I shall never fathom. You can swear at me if you like, but laugh I must."

And laugh Miss Dursley did, whenever she thought of Augusta, Constance and Bertha Dane, for the next few days; but laugh as loud as Paul when by himself, or with only Fly and Paris to hear him, she did not; and then came a day when the laugh was all on Paul's side.

With that day came Bertha and Chloe to return Miss Dursley's visit. They rode over, and Dorothy's amazement when Bertha introduced Chloe as her youngest sister was as great as her anger with Paul for playing her such a trick, and with herself for having been so taken in.

She could scarcely keep her countenance as she glanced from the great, stolid Bertha, who looked plainer than ever in her riding habit, to the little fairy-like Chloe, with her star-like eyes, her silvery laugh and pretty manners; only anger prevented her from bursting into a fit of laughter as she thought of her stupidity and Paul's silly joke.

The girls had not been five minutes in the drawing-room before Paul, who must have ridden like a jockey to have done it, returned from a long round, and appeared as surprised to see Chloe as she did to see him, though as a matter of fact she had contrived to tell him the previous day of her intended visit.

"I did not know there were four Miss Danes," said Miss Dursley to Chloe. "Paul never mentioned you," she added with a severe look at her brother.

"I suppose he did not think me of sufficient consequence; you see, there is so much less of me than of the others to mention. All the same, I think it was very rude of you to ignore me like that, Mr. Dursley."

"I did not mean to be rude," said Paul, in a low voice, as he glanced at the little trim figure set off to perfection in the tight-fitting riding habit.

"There is another thing you have done that you ought not to have done: why did you tell me you were never at home except on Thursdays? You have no business to be at home to-day," said Miss Chloe.

"I knew you were coming, so I came home."

"And very wrong it was of you. I came to see Miss Dursley, not you; you ought to have gone to see father."

"I am going. I shall ride back with you and Miss Bertha if you'll let me."

"I am not sure that I shall. I shall ask your sister. I want to have a nice quiet talk with her while you take Bertha all round your stables and garden. I want to know all about your horses."

"Then I had better take you instead of Miss Bertha."

"You won't do anything of the kind. I have come to see Miss Dursley, and I am going to spend my afternoon with her. Bertha wants to go to the almshouses too, so you had better start at once," said Chloe, and Paul was obliged to obey. But he ran Bertha round the garden and stables in double-quick time, and discovered that the almshouses could not be visited so late in the day.

When he came back he found Dorothy had fallen a victim to Chloe's charms, and was packing her up a basket of lavender water, elder flower water, rose water, pot-pourri, and various preserves for him to take over the next day.

He was allowed to ride back with them simply and solely on Sir John's account, as Miss Chloe endeavoured to impress upon him; but Paul did not believe that was the only reason, though he pretended he did.

"What do you think of my taste now, Dorothy?" he asked, on his return.

"I think she is charming; but don't you wish you may get her, Paul? She is a desperate little flirt; but whether it is a malignant or a benign form of flirtation, I have not yet seen enough of her to discover. I don't think she is a young woman to be had for the asking, though; still, 'nothing venture, nothing have.' I wish you success with all my heart. It is a relief, too, to find

you still sane, which I doubted when you told me you were in love with one of those sisters of her's."

"I did not ; I said I was in love with a Miss Dane, Chloe is a Miss Dane whom I hope to make Mrs. Dursley one day. I am sorry to say Sir John is not so well to-day ; he is always worse if Chloe goes out ; the cheerful Constance irritated him to-day. If he does not get better soon I shall propose calling in Peter ; I should like to pull him through."

"For Chloe's sake, I suppose ?"

"For his own, also ; he is a nice old fellow in spite of his irritability, which is partly disease, and he is an excellent companion, full of anecdote, and has led a life of adventure ; no wonder he finds Eastfolk dull," said Paul.

Sir John was laid up for another fortnight, making no improvement, during which period Paul and Chloe grew more intimate, and, to amuse the patient, held concerts in his room, till one day matters reached a sort of climax, and Paul determined to send for further advice. He and Chloe had a little tiff over a song one day, and to punish Paul, when he arrived the next day in his professional capacity, he found she had gone to Eastwich to lunch, and had not yet come back.

In her absence Sir John had declined to eat any luncheon, and when Paul appeared, Augusta, Constance and Bertha were all standing round their father's sofa trying to induce him to eat some cold pheasant. It was then three o'clock, and Sir John had just been roused to tell them he would see them all in a condition they would decidedly have preferred to avoid, before he ate in the middle of the afternoon, when Paul arrived.

"Sir John is retrogressing sadly, I fear, Mr. Dursley," said Augusta.

"I thought him a trifle better yesterday. I think Sir John had better have further advice, it would be more satisfactory for us all," said Paul.

"What do you say to that, father ? I think it is a famous plan ; it will cheer you up and give you a fresh start ; by all means let us have some London physician, they do such wonderful things now-a-days, I dare say they might almost cure you," said Miss Constance hopefully.

"Much you know about it !" growled Sir John.

"I don't know, of course, I can only hope," said Constance.

"And pray," said Bertha, in an undertone.

"Whom would you suggest, Mr. Dursley?" said Augusta.

"I shall have Dursley's brother, if I have any one at all; what would his fee be, do you suppose, Dursley?"

"I'll write and ask him; he would come here for less than his usual fee, because he would see my sister and me."

"Oh! that is capital. I do think you are a fortunate man, father," said Miss Constance.

"An enlarged liver and a weak heart may constitute your idea of fortunate, Constance, but it does not strike me as the right word to apply to a man in my condition, blessed with three daughters who drive him mad when Chloe is out."

Constance smiled brightly at Paul, and tossed her chin up as much as to say, "we must not mind, he can't help it," and then she took up the plate with some pheasant on it and, going to Sir John's side, said:

"Well, now the question of a second opinion is so satisfactorily settled, do try and eat a little piece of this nice pheasant, father."

"D—n the pheasant," exclaimed Sir John, with such emphasis on the verb that Paul could scarcely keep his countenance.

Bertha left the room promptly, Constance coloured and remarked that as it seemed to irritate rather than please her father, perhaps it had better be sent away.

"Old Mrs. Jones will be so pleased to have it, it will be quite a boon to her," she remarked.

"Then for heaven's sake let old Mrs. Jones have the boon and the pheasant; go and take it to her, and tell her what a fortunate woman she is to have the wing of a pheasant to comfort her when dying of cancer," said Sir John grimly.

Paul disliked Miss Dane more than he did Constance, and thought if only she would follow her sisters, he might amuse the old man till Chloe came home; so he pulled out his stethoscope, at the sight of which Augusta fled as though it were a loaded revolver.

Sir John chuckled when the door closed on her, and recovering his temper, he asked Paul to go and sing to him as he had had no music all that day.

Paul insisted on his patient taking some light refreshment first, and then went to the piano and, accompanying himself as best he could, sang song after song; till at last he took up one with a

violin obbligato, over which he and Chloe had quarrelled the previous day. He muddled over the introduction, and then when he began to sing, lo and behold the violin began to play, and looking round he saw Chloe, who had been in the room unknown to him for the last half hour, standing laughing as she played.

"How long have you been here?" said Paul, when the song was finished.

"Ever since you began to sing."

"You little witch; why the plague couldn't you have accompanied him?" said Sir John.

"I was enjoying his efforts; but, dad, why are you going to have another doctor? Are you worse?" said Chloe, anxiously, kneeling down by her father's sofa, and laying her cheek on his.

"I am always worse when you are away."

"I wish I had not gone. It is all Mr. Dursley's fault; he should not quarrel with me as he did yesterday. I hope your brother is nicer than you are, else he had better not come down here."

"I believe he is, and he is certainly much cleverer, which is more to the point," said Paul.

"I don't know. You have managed father better than any doctor he has ever had. I don't think he is worse; the others worry him when I am out. I won't leave you again, dad, till you are well; I will only go out for an hour at a time. I'll never leave you for longer again, except at night with nurse."

And Chloe kept her promise.

That night Paul wrote to Dr. Dursley and, as we know, telegraphed a day or two after for him to come down to Bilney Hall.

(To be continued.)

Two New Women of the Last Century.

TWO women of the eighteenth century stand out conspicuously as types of the new sisterhood that we hear so much of nowadays. They were born too soon. If they had lived in the present age, they would have been hailed with enthusiasm instead of amazement and disgust. They would have been shining lights at the Pioneer Club, their utterances would have been carefully noted, and their eccentricities would have been admired and imitated. One of these women is Mary Wollstonecraft, the other Lady Caroline Lamb.

Mary Wollstonecraft was the Sarah Grand of her day, but a Sarah Grand without any followers of her own sex—a voice crying in the wilderness that met with no response. She stood alone in her outcry for the rights of women ; she was the only one who dared to preach the now-general doctrine that a woman has a life of her own to live independently of men ; she was the first to ignore the outer ceremony of marriage as compared with the spiritual union of hearts. For her doctrines, which were hooted at as outrageous, she suffered severely. Imlay, the man she loved with the whole strength of her nature, could not rise to the high level of her expectations : forsaken, insulted, scoffed at, driven to such desperation as to attempt suicide at Putney Bridge, she endured social ostracism, till Godwin released her to enjoy one brief year of rest and peace. She left behind her a reputation by no means enviable amongst the orthodox of her sex, such as Mrs. Inchbald. They shook their heads and turned up their eyes at the very mention of her name.

Lady Caroline Lamb was a creature of another order—a being of fire and air. Without the clear intellect or the reasoning powers of Mary Wollstonecraft, she had a brilliance, a fascination, an individuality which gave her the charm of a heather bell fresh with dew. The opinion of fashionable London was nothing to her ; her daring, her freedom from conventionality in an age of conventionality, marked her out as new and strange. Had she lived at the end of the nineteenth century, instead of the eighteenth, she would have been one of the leaders of her sex. The “wine of her passion,” as our critics put it, would have amply atoned for her extravagant adoration of Byron, and her wearing

the dress of a page would have been considered thoroughly up to date. Does not Angelica assume boy's clothes in that much admired portion of the "Heavenly Twins,"—the Tenor and the Boy?

And as to Lady Caroline making copy out of her own private griefs and grievances, what is that but an instance of journalistic instinct cropping up before due time? Like her own Calantha, Lady Caroline never had any secrets; she wished to have none. Calantha left her private letters about, so that any one could read them; Lady Caroline seems to do the same: she is eager to tell her story to any one who will listen to it. Frank and fascinating, she was always true to herself; there was not a false note in her. In "Glenarvon," she has practically given us her autobiography. As a novel it is worthless—as a self-revelation, it is invaluable.

The miniature exhibited by Mr. Murray in the Gallery of Fair Women, represents Lady Caroline's outward woman in the brown velvet doublet and lace collar of a page. It is the dress she wore during her intimacy with Byron. We see here the curly crop of pale golden hair, the large expressive hazel eyes, the small, slight, graceful, child-like figure. It is left to our imagination to conjure up the musical intonation of voice and the brilliant sallies of this creature of caprice and impulse and whim. "Her talk, her manners and her character," so Bulwer-Lytton tells us, "shifted their colours as rapidly as those of a chameleon."

In spite of everything, she was the first, the only one, to her husband. He was always passionately fond of her. He told Lady Holland, one of the few he ever spoke to on the subject, "that his wife was the most exquisite charm and the keenest trial of his life." For a brief period she was certainly the "soul's idol" of Byron, and later on, she kindled the boyish adoration of Bulwer-Lytton.

So much has been said about her eccentricities that it is something of a surprise to find, from Mr. McCullagh Torrens' "Life of Lord Melbourne," what a few of them were. She was returning a visit at Danesbury, and having no one to keep her company, she chose to sit outside with the coachman instead of taking her usual place inside the carriage. On arriving at the door of the mansion, the footman waited to hand her down, when, to his horror, she said, "I am going to jump off, and you must catch me;" and before he could say a word, the deed was done. She paid her visit decorously, but of course there was

much talk in the servants' hall. A great lady might do this with impunity now, it would only be looked upon as an ebullition of high spirits.

At another time, Lady Caroline happened to come into the room just before a great dinner party, when the servants were laying the table. She found fault with the decorations, they were too level and too low ; there ought to be something picturesque or elevated, a group of figures or a tier of flowers. The butler listened, but went on spreading out the contents of his plate chest. Lady Caroline, however, would not have her ideas set at nought. She ordered the centre-piece away, and without disturbing the arrangements of the table, she lightly stepped into the vacant place, and stood in a graceful attitude, to illustrate her meaning. The butler flew for his master, who, when he came in, cried in his gentlest tone, "Caroline, Caroline !" and taking her in his arms, carried her out into the sunshine, talking all the time of ordinary matters, so as to draw off her attention. That evening she received her friends with her usual grace of manner. But might not this incident be explained as the craving after æsthetic beauty of form, not then recognized in table decorations ? The butler could imagine nothing finer than the silver centre-piece ; Lady Caroline had a soul above centre-pieces ; she demanded something graceful, poetic, individual. When she tried to make others see as she saw, they looked upon her as a raving lunatic. Her Celtic blood accounts for some of her characteristics ; her quick perceptions, her warm heart, her love of beauty, together with the varying changes of her excitable temperament.

Lady Caroline Ponsonby was the only daughter of Lord and Lady Bessborough, and was born on the 3rd of November, 1785, thus being three years older than Byron, whose birth was on January 22nd, 1788. In consequence of the illness of her mother, who was a daughter of Earl Spencer, Lady Caroline was sent to Italy under the care of a servant, and remained there from the age of four till nine. She was then brought to Devonshire House, to be brought up with her two cousins, called in "Glenarvon," Lady Sophia and Lady Frances (Lady Morpeth and Lady Middleton). What these early days were, Lady Caroline tells in her own words. "Children neglected by their mothers, served on silver in the mornings, carrying down their

plates to the kitchen, no one to attend on them, thought all people were dukes or beggars, did not know if bread or butter was made, wondered if horses were fed on beef, &c."

Until fifteen, the passionate, whimsical little girl learned nothing ; her instinct was for music, she delighted in it, and cried when it was pathetic, but she was not allowed to follow it up. She could neither write nor spell, yet she made verses which her family thought beautiful. She preferred "washing a dog or polishing a piece of Derbyshire spar, or breaking a horse, to any accomplishment in the world. Drawing-rooms, looking-glasses, finery or dress company were her abhorrence."

She sometimes went on visits to her grandmother, Lady Spencer. Here, the housekeeper in hoop and ruffles ruled over seventy servants, and always attended her ladies in the drawing-room. The stiff rules and regulations of these great houses often galled Lady Caroline's free and independent spirit. In "Glenarvon" she speaks with delight of standing on the summit of a cliff in Ireland, hour after hour, to behold the immense ocean, watching the waves as they swelled to the height of mountains, then dashed with impetuous force against the rocks below.

She was about nineteen when her future husband, the Hon. William Lamb, came upon the scene. She tells Lady Morgan that she thought him beautiful, and far the cleverest person then about, and the most daring in his opinions and in his love of liberty and independence. "He offered to marry me and I refused because of my temper, which was too violent ; he asked me again and was not refused the second time, because I adored him." The second time, too, he was an eligible *parti*, for by the death of his elder brother he was next heir to his father, Viscount Melbourne. Lady Caroline, who was a shrewd reader of men, gives us in "Glenarvon" an estimate of her husband's character. "He had a warm, ardent and generous nature, a distinguished and prepossessing manner, entirely free from affectation. It is seldom," she adds, "that this can be said of any man, and more seldom of one possessed of such singular beauty of person. He appeared, indeed, wholly to forget himself, was ever more eager in the interests of others than of his own. He was so sincere that even in conversation he never misstated or exaggerated a fact. When he loved—and he never really loved but once—it was with so violent, so blind

a passion that he might be said to dote upon the very errors of the girl to whom he was attached." It is impossible not to recognize this sketch of Lord Avondale as a portrait of Lord Melbourne. It has, too, a singular resemblance to the pen and ink sketch, given by Leslie, the painter, of the same man, at a later period of his life. Leslie says that "Lord Melbourne's head was a truly noble one ; he was the finest specimen of manly beauty in the meridian of life I ever saw ; not only were his features eminently handsome, but his expression was in the highest degree intellectual. His laugh was frequent and the most joyous possible, and his voice so deep and musical that to hear him say the most ordinary things was a pleasure ; his frankness, his freedom from affectation and his peculiar humour made everything he said quite original." Such was the man who lavished his affection on fitful, child-like, Lady Caroline. She enjoyed love-making, but she rebelled at the idea of marriage ; she even offered to follow her future husband as his clerk. We catch some glimpses of their love scenes in "Glenarvon."

"It is but the name of wife I hate," replies the spoiled and wayward Calantha ; "I must command, . . . my will,"

"*Your* will shall be my *law*," answers Lord Avondale.

After the wedding, when her husband came to take her away, she said, "*I will not go.*" It was with shrieks of despair that she was torn from her father's arms. At the time of the marriage, which took place on the 3rd June, 1805, Lady Caroline was not twenty years old. The honeymoon seems to have been chequered with a good many tantrums on the part of the bride. At one time she would talk and laugh, at another, she would stamp her foot and threaten to return to her father. When she said, "You must not contradict me in anything," her husband gave in and let her have her own way. He opened her eyes to many things about which she had hitherto been ignorant. At first she shrank with pain and horror from this new world ; by degrees, especially when she heard the freedom of talk that went on at Bocket Hall, she became accustomed to it. Her cousins had been contented embroidering muslins or painting on velvet ; she hated her needle, and eagerly drank in all that she heard passing around her. Of her three children, two died in infancy, and only one, a son of weak intellect, lived to grow up and to survive her. When she

was thrown into the fashionable world of London it seemed to her like a dream of enchantment—all was fresh, beautiful and new. She became a social success. People stared at her, wondered at her odd sayings and abrupt ways, but made all haste to secure her for their balls and dinners. As the wife of a promising Whig minister—the coming man,—she was the centre of an admiring crowd. She had two questionable friends, Lady Oxford and Lady Cahir—called in “Glenarvon,” Lady Mandeville and Lady A. Selwyn. Lady Oxford read Greek, and though she had no husband, she had lovers whom she despised—“bearers of shawls, writers of sonnets and callers of carriages.” In such company it was natural that Lady Caroline should flirt, and flirt she did. She was a favoured guest at Holland House, and describes Lady Holland as the Princess of Madagascar with a pen dipped in gall.

“At the end of a long gallery, two thick wax tapers rendering darkness visible, the princess was seated. A poet of an emaciated and sallow complexion (Rogers) stood beside her. He at all times said precisely that which was most unpleasant to the person he appeared to praise. This ‘yellow hyena’ had, however, a heart noble, magnanimous and generous.” It was the “yellow hyena” who first told Lady Caroline of the rising star. He said, “You should know the new poet,” and offered her the MS. of “Childe Harold” to read. She read it and that was enough. The first actual meeting took place one night at Lady Westmoreland’s when Byron was the lion of the season. “Lady Westmoreland led me up to him. I looked earnestly at him and turned on my heel. My opinion in my journal is mad, bad, and dangerous to know.” So says Lady Caroline in a letter to Lady Morgan, but what the real spiritual effect of this meeting was on her mind we learn best from her account in “Glenarvon.” There we see the overwhelming fascination, the keen sense of alarm, the desire to escape, and the inability to do so. “She beheld a youth, for he had not the form or the look of manhood” (Byron was then twenty-three), “leaning against the trunk of a tree. It was one of those faces which having once beheld, we never afterwards forget. It seemed as if the soul of passion had been stamped and painted in every feature. The eye beamed into life, as it threw up its dark ardent gaze with a look nearly of inspiration, while the proud curl of the upper lip expressed haughtiness and bitter contempt, yet an air of melancholy and

dejection shaded and softened every harsher expression. Such a countenance spoke to the heart, and filled it with one vague and powerful interest so strong, so indefinable, that it could not easily be overcome."

At the second meeting the same impression becomes intensified.

"Calantha's eyes had long been fixed on one, who took no part in the scene, whose pale cheek and brow expressed disappointed hope or joyless indifference. Was it indeed Lord Glenarvon she beheld? Yes; it was himself. Face to face, she stood before him and gazed with eager curiosity upon him. Never did the hand of a sculptor produce a face and form more finely wrought, so full of soul, so ever-varying in its expression. Oh! was it in woman's nature to hear him and not cherish every word he uttered? And having heard him, was it in the human heart ever again to forget those accents, which awakened every interest and quieted every apprehension? It was Glenarvon she beheld, and her soul trembled within her and felt its danger."

Though she was pierced to the heart, she did not like the wily turn of Glenarvon's eye, the contemptuous sneer of his curling lip, the soft, passionless tones of his voice

All the same, her infatuation grew stronger. The charmer knew how to play upon her like a skilful musician; in the evening, he was ardent, the next morning cold, *distract* and pre-occupied. He often said he could never feel interest or love for anything on earth. "There is no danger in my friendship," he said; "I am cold as the grave, as death; and all here," pressing his hand to his heart, "is chilled, lost, absorbed."

All this is so consistent with Byron's character that there can be no doubt that Lady Caroline was painting accurately from life, and that these chapters give a genuine transcript of the romance, that was at once the torture and the joy of her life. The thought that she could amuse or soothe the gloomy poet made her blest; he allowed himself that she was the only woman who never bored him, and as their intimacy progressed, he told her, "Few have so many faults, yet how is it that you have wound yourself already round this cold, this selfish heart?" During his long walks with her, he described the far more beautiful and magnificent scenery of the countries he had travelled in, countries teeming with rich fruit, vineyards and olive groves, mountains soaring to the skies. He told her he hated these cold northern climes and the bottle-

green of the Atlantic. And then he spoke of love, and she listened and trembled. "Remember me in your prayers, my gentlest friend," he whispered. "Even in the still night let some remembrance of me occur. Think of me, for I am jealous, even of thy dreams." There is one passage in Lady Caroline's novel, when she looks at her husband asleep, which would do credit to some of the modern fiction; it is full of irresistible conviction—it is the genuine outburst of a heart that feels impelled to evil and is yet conscious of the good it forsakes. Byron said that Lady Caroline's husband was as superior to him as Hyperion to a satyr. He evidently had him in his mind when he described Lord Henry Amundville, in "Don Juan:"

"He was a cold, good, honourable man,
Proud of his birth, and proud of everything,
A goodly spirit for a state divan.
A figure fit to walk before a king,
Tall, stately, formed to lead the courtly van
On birthdays, glorious with a star and string.

• • • • •
And being of the Council called the Privy,
Lord Henry walked into his Cabinet,
To furnish matter for a future Livy,
To tell how he reduced the nation's debt."

Absorbed in political questions, there is every reason to suppose that Lady Caroline's husband left her pretty much to herself. She tells us in "Glenarvon" that he remarked one evening at dinner that she looked ill, and took her hand. She would rather he had struck her to the heart. At one time she took a pen and wrote a full confession of her guilty feelings, the next she tore this doubtful testimony of an erring heart, and appealed to Heaven for mercy. But the struggle was vain. From her childhood she had never refused herself one wish, one prayer, and now she did not know how to curb the fierce, the maddening fever that raged within her. She shrieked when her children came near her. Here are her own words: "I am lost," she cried; "I love, I worship. To live without Glenarvon will be death. One look, one smile from him is dearer than aught else that Heaven can bestow." The diamond bracelets on her arms were his gift, the chain and locket which contained his dark hair had been given by him, the clasp that fastened the band round her waist was composed of richest jewels brought by him, and

"the heart that was thus girt and circled by his gifts beat for him alone."

If we are to accept Lady Caroline's account in "Glenarvon," she meets her lover disguised as a page ; he repeats his vows, he gives her a ring to be a marriage bond between them, and swears that his life, his love, is hers.

She calls herself "miserable, and fallen." It is impossible to look upon her as an innocent woman ; over and over again she calls herself guilty. Her letters are full of reproaches ; she says, "I have wandered from right, and been punished," and writing to Lady Morgan of Byron, she calls him "that dear, that angel, that misguided and misguiding Byron, though he left that dreadful legacy on to me—my memory."

We hear a great deal of Lady Caroline's pursuit of Byron, but it is certain that for some time she occupied first place with him. She was the Lady Adeline Amundville of "Don Juan," and in the letter which he allowed to be genuine (preserved verbatim in Lady Morgan's memoirs), he wrote to her as "his dearest Caroline." "If all I have said and done, and am still but too ready to say and do, have not sufficiently proved what my real feelings are, and must ever be towards you, my love, I have no proof to offer. No other shall ever hold the place in my affections, which is, and shall be, most sacred to you." . . . "Promise not to love you—ah ! Caroline, that is beyond promising. I was and am, yours freely and entirely, to obey, honour, and fly with you when, where, and how yourself might and may determine."

But the hour of infatuation passed. Lady Caroline remained the same, but Byron found it easy to forget the heroine of the hour—to slight, ridicule, and even hate her. He did so with Jane Clermont, and he did so with this distracted and excitable spoiled child till he almost drove her to frenzy. He went to stay at a country house ; she wrote to him every day, passionate, remorseful, beseeching letters ; she heard that they were handed round to be commented on, that her presents were given to others, and at length, a letter was brought to her. It is given in "Glenarvon," and is a *fac simile* of Byron's real letter, which is as follows :

"LADY CAROLINE,—I am no longer your lover, and since you oblige me to confess it by this truly unfeminine persecution, learn that I am attached to another, whose name, of course, it would be

dishonourable to mention. I shall ever remember with gratitude the many instances I have received of the predilection you have shown in my favour. I shall ever continue your friend, if your ladyship will permit me so to style myself, and as a first proof of my regard, I offer you this advice : correct your vanity, which is ridiculous ; exert your absurd caprices on others, and leave me in peace.—Your most obedient servant, BYRON."

The blow struck home. It was as deep as the subtlest enemy could desire. To have romance and sentiment met with ridicule and contempt, what woman could bear it?

"It is all very well," wrote Lady Caroline to William Godwin many years afterwards, "if one died at the end of a tragic scene after playing a desperate part ; but if one lives, and instead of growing wiser, one remains the victim of every folly and passion, what then?" Calantha, the heroine of the novel—betrayed and forsaken by her lover—dies in her husband's arms, at a village inn. Lady Caroline did not die after her "tragic scene" with Byron, she lived to write "*Glenarvon*," to pour out the history of her infatuation to those who would listen to it. "Woe be to those who have ever loved *Glenarvon* !" "O, better had it been to die than to see and hear *Glenarvon*. When he smiled, it was like the radiance of Heaven ; when he spoke, his voice was more soothing than music !" So the lovelorn and forsaken woman bewailed her faithless lover. His comment was that the "portrait was not good ; he did not sit long enough."

We are told by Lady Caroline that she wrote her novel in one month, in the middle of the night, unknown to any one but Miss Welsh, a governess. It was necessary to have it copied (it certainly must have been, for a more wretched scrawl than Lady Caroline's it is impossible to conceive), so she sent for Mr. Woodhead, a famous copier, to come to Lady Caroline Lamb at Melbourne House. He came and found Miss Welsh, beautifully dressed, seated at the harp, and Lady Caroline, in page's clothes, looking like a boy of fourteen, at a writing table. He addressed Miss Welsh as Lady Caroline ; she showed him the real author, but he could not believe that a school-boy could have written such a book. The next time he came, he found Lady Caroline in her own clothes ; she told him that William Osmond, the young author, was dead.

"Glenarvon" was published anonymously in 1816. Lady Caroline sent a copy to her husband, and she says—though it is hard to believe the statement—that he was delighted with it, and they became united just as the world thought they were separated for ever. On the day fixed for signing the deed of separation, Lady Caroline was found seated beside her husband, feeding him with tiny scraps of bread and butter. The lawyers were sent away and the reconciliation was complete.

It was many years afterwards that Bulwer-Lytton's romantic sentiment for Lady Caroline set in. He was a young man of twenty-two; she was ten years older, but looked much younger than her age. "He loved, was intoxicated and was happy." He was a constant visitor at Bocket Hall; he drank in Lady Caroline's honeyed flatteries and sweet words, he was alone with her at all hours, she allowed him to wear Byron's ring—a signal mark of favour—and sent for him when she thought she was dying. "If ever tenderness seemed real, hers was." But a new favourite appeared, and as Bulwer-Lytton grew jealous, Lady Caroline grew cold. He says, except for her large hazel eyes, curly golden hair and beautiful teeth, she might have been called plain, but she had to a surpassing extent the attribute of charm, and never failed to please when she chose to do so.

Sometimes, at Bocket Hall, a page was sent round at three in the morning, to summon the visitors to hear Lady Caroline play on the organ. She often stopped playing, and talked so brilliantly, that her hearers listened and never thought of bed. Yet how pathetic is one of her letters to William Godwin! She says, "I am like the wreck of a little boat, for I never come up to the sublime or beautiful, merely a little, gay, merry, boat, which perhaps stranded itself at Vauxhall or London Bridge, or wounded without killing itself as a butterfly does in a tallow candle. I was happy, rich, well, joyful, and surrounded by friends. I have now one kind faithful friend in William Lamb, two others in my father and brother, but health and spirits and all else are gone. How? Oh! assuredly not by the visitation of God, but slowly and gradually by my own fault."

She complained of the purposelessness of her life. "I have nothing to do—I mean necessarily," she writes to Godwin. "There is no particular reason why I should exist; it conduces to no one's happiness, and, on the contrary, I stand in the way

of many. I seem to have lived 500 years." Hemmed in by conventionalities, her free and independent nature could find no fitting outlets. There was nothing for it but to hug the remembrance of her old romance to her heart, and weep over it. At one time, she made a bonfire of copies of Byron's letters to her, and had a circle of young girls dressed in white to dance round it, singing some verses of her own composition.

As she was driving out, she unexpectedly saw Byron's funeral procession passing along, and the shock was so great that she never recovered it. The separation between herself and her husband took place the following year (1825). On the twentieth anniversary of her wedding day,—the day she left Bocket Hall for ever—she wrote some pathetic verses as she sat under her favourite tree.

"Little birds, in yonder grove,
Making nests and making love,
Come, sing upon your fav'rite tree
Once more your sweetest songs to me.
An exile from these scenes I go,
Whither, I neither care nor know ;
Perhaps to some far distant shore,
Never again to see thee more.

• • • • •

This is my twentieth marriage year
They celebrate with Hassard's beer ;
They dance, they sing, they bless the day,
I weep the while and well I may,
Husband nor child to meet me come,
Without a friend, without a home,
I sit beneath my fav'rite tree.
Sing, then, my little birds, to me
In music, love and liberty !"

Lady Caroline had lived too much to live long. She went abroad with her brother, and again returned to England ; but only to die. She died at Melbourne House, January 26th, 1828. Her husband, faithful to her, even to the last, came from Ireland to see her die. Much loved and much loving, generous, undisciplined, capricious and kind-hearted ; under better conditions, her life might have expanded into fairer proportions. As it was, she was treated like a petted child, instead of a reasonable woman. She was an eighteenth century "Nora Helmer." What wonder if there was a revolt?

C. J. HAMILTON.

Too Dearly Bought.

"BRAVA ! Brava ! Oh, admirably well done ! I knew you had it in you." There was what seemed a faint ring of exultation in the speaker's low clear voice, as he pushed aside the curtains that divided the little drawing-room into two, and confronted the startled occupant of the inner portion of the room. The girl, for she was no more, was in an unconventional position enough—lying prone on the floor a huddled heap of draperies and writhen limbs, with one arm flung out in terribly suggestive rigidity. At the sound of the voice, she sat upright. Crimson confusion flooded her face, and swept away the white convulsed look which had been stamped there a moment before.

"How could you !—how—how long have you been here ?" she stammered.

"Let me help you to rise," said her visitor gravely. "Mrs. Mostyn, I know, always requires a little assistance after the curtain has fallen."

"Don't !" flashed out the girl, springing to her feet. "Was this fair ? Was this kind ?" Her voice was hoarse and thick, her eyes dilated. She put her hand to her throat, palpitating with the quick, hard-drawn breaths, as if she were trying to choke down the excitement which almost overmastered her.

"No, it was not fair," said the man with due contrition. "I have been very inconsiderate, but I heard your voice ; I heard you were going through the last scene, so I would not let Mrs. Manners announce me. And yet, if you will forgive me for my thoughtlessness, I can hardly regret it. I have come to see you about a very important matter, and if I were superstitious, I should think it was a good omen to find you as I did. I have always prophesied success for you, have I not ? Well, I think it is coming now, and sooner than I could have dreamed." He paused for a moment and looked into her wide startled eyes with a grave protecting kindness. "Have you been out to-day ? No, just as I thought. Let us go into the garden, then. But I must speak to Mrs. Manners, though. She must look after you better."

"Oh, never mind about that," said the girl impatiently, pushing back her disordered hair. "Yes, if you go into the garden I shall join you in a moment or two." And she hurriedly left the room.

"Pity she takes it so dreadfully in earnest. However, that will do no harm at first, and it will soon wear off," said the man to himself, as he sauntered round the room, glancing at a book here and there.

The room was of the ordinary "genteel lodgings" stamp and in no way differed from hundreds of others, save for the number of books lying about and the profusion of flowers—not hothouse flowers, but honest, hardy, open-air spring flowers, bringing into the little London room a whiff of clean, fresh country air, and suggestions of the fields, of new life, of rising sap, of moist glistening furrows, and of green, growing things. The long window opened on to a little flight of steps leading down to the garden, a terribly draughty arrangement in winter and bleak early spring, but pleasant enough to-day, and by-and-by the visitor strolled out. The garden was little more than a long strip of grass with a clump or two lilac bushes, but it boasted a well-grown lime in the centre, now shaking out its broad green leaves in their first silken freshness against the soft spring sky. A wicker chair or two stood about under the drooping branches. Here the visitor sat down, a smile half-amused, half-kindly curving for a moment his thin and singularly mobile lips. The play of the mouth and the firm set of chin and jaw were in no way concealed, as he wore neither moustache nor beard. Those who did not know him would probably have pronounced him to be an acute and successful barrister, while no two people would likely have agreed as to his probable age—a subject of frequent conjecture indeed; some holding that he was younger, others that he was older than he looked. Everything about him was of interest to a large section both of society and the wider world, for people "who were anybody" would have recognized him at once as Mr. Frank Dighton, the popular and successful actor-manager, who had come so rapidly to the front. Those who knew him would also have wondered exceedingly how this busy and much sought after man came to be sitting in that suburban garden this forenoon, and evidently the same idea occurred to Miss Nugent, as in a few minutes she came down the steps and crossed the grass.

"Now," she said, with a smile and a quick little flush, "I am quite rational again, and prepared to hear what weighty matter brought you out here to the ends of the earth this morning. I think it must have been the unexpected honour that so over-

whelmed me—but really, it was very good of you,” she added earnestly.

Miss Nugent was by no means unknown either—no member of Mr. Dighton’s company could be—but of late she had been attracting a good deal of attention from her acting in the much talked of “society” drama now running at the Original Theatre. She was tall even in this age of tall women, but carried her slender height, as one could see even in the few steps across the grass, with a certain graceful stateliness that would have made her noticeable anywhere. As to her face, opinions were as divided about it as about Mr. Dighton’s years, and they ran through the whole gamut of description from “beautiful” to “positively plain,” and for each there was a certain justification. The pale, rather irregular face owed all the beauty that some saw in it to the charm of her smile and ever varying expression; above all, to the wonderful hazel eyes that seemed to change with every mood and feeling, now clear and bright as the amber waters of a Highland burn flowing over its pebbles in the autumn sun, now darkening in the shadow of a cloud or of overhanging rocks. At this moment they were glowing golden with pleasure and expectancy. Mr. Dighton was, perhaps, not wholly unaware how his presence could quicken the light in those wistful eyes.

“There is so little time at night, and I think the matter important. I don’t know what you may think about it,” with a smile. “I wish you to take Mrs. Mostyn’s place next week.”

The girl uttered a faint cry and sat staring at him.

“Mrs. Mostyn is bothering me again, wanting to break her engagement—higher terms, and all the rest of it. This time I mean to give her a little surprise. I shall take her at her word, and next week I hope to introduce a new Mrs. Blake, who will do the part even more justice than her predecessor. Oh, yes, I am sure you will,” answering what he imagined was in the girl’s mind. “I have been watching you for some time, and I am not afraid, and now, after what I have seen to-day, I feel sure of you. Don’t imagine that friendship has anything to do with the matter. A manager can’t afford to be friendly beyond a certain point. I hope I have shown you that I have not forgotten old days, but this is far too important an affair for sentiment—that might procure a place as a super, but hardly as leading lady.”

Well, she was taking it rather oddly. To step from under-

study into the place of her principal, and that permanently, might well take away the girl's breath ; but it was success, fortune, applause, he was placing within her reach, a position in her profession and in the world for which she could hardly have dared to hope for years to come. Surely she might show a little more appreciation.

Miss Nugent seemed to wake to the necessity too. She looked up from the long hands lying folded on her knee, which she had been studying as if she could read her future in their lines.

"It is too much," she said in a breathless sort of way. "Oh, I know what it means, what it would bring, if I but do my part"—she threw out her expressive hands, and her eyes kindled to a glow at the vision of sudden success—"and I know, too, how much I owe already to you—and now this!—this!" and she turned to the man with a look that expressed more than her halting words could say. "Of course, I am letter perfect in the part now, and after what you heard this morning, you won't, perhaps, think me conceited," with a delightful shy smile, "if I say I would, in some ways, give a slightly different rendering from Mrs. Mostyn ; but," and the pale trouble clouded her face again, "I—I hardly know how to say it to you, but I hate the part."

"You hate the part!" in blank amazement. "Why, it is *the* part of the play, and the most powerful one on the stage just now."

"I know, I know, that is it. It is too powerful for me ; it gets too great a hold on me. It has a fascination for me that is growing horrible. I hate it, I shudder at it, and yet I cannot keep from going over and over it, as you saw this morning. I seem to lose my very self in it. For hours, days together, I have no identity of my own. I am Isabel Nugent no longer, but Hester Blake in every fibre. I think as she would, speak as she would, feel, wish, hope, hate as if I were really she. And now if I throw my whole heart into it, as I must and will—be Hester Blake sleeping and waking"—she broke off with a timid glance into his. "I know," she said very humbly and hastily, "that this probably seems mere folly to you, and worse—thankless folly. But you have always allowed me to speak freely to you." Her voice trembled away.

"This is mere morbid nonsense, if you will allow *me* to speak freely, Miss Nugent. You are living far too much alone. Devotion to work is all very well, but you may carry it too far.

You may be thankful, meantime, for your imaginative power. Wait for a year or two, and you may find it more difficult to get out of yourself and into your part. I think at this time of day we need hardly go into the old question of morality in art and so on," rather impatiently ; "although if there was any need for it, I think I could make out a pretty good case even for Hester Blake. If she is not an example, you can regard her as a warning if necessary. I at least have not much fear that my old friend Isabel will be contaminated by poor Hester. But seriously, for I have not time for abstract questions, you do not really mean that you will let a scruple or a fancy of this kind, or whatever you please to call it, stand in the way of your success, of *our* success, and"—after a second's pause—"my wishes."

"You do wish it—really?" raising wistful eyes to his.

"Certainly I do. Don't I wish your success and mine, and, above all, the Original's? Besides, there is always the pleasure of seeing your predictions verified. I have always told you you would get on, and now I expect you to do me credit. You are just a little too young for the part, but that cannot be helped."

"I haven't the courage to refuse ; I almost wish I had, or, rather, that you hadn't asked me, and there had been no need to decide," with rather a tremulous smile ; "and yet, success—success ! Ah, you don't know how you tempt me when you hold out a bait like that."

The man smiled slightly, but, doubtless, in the girl's intoxicating dreams there was an element that had never entered into his ambitions. Success to her would mean the conquest of one as well as of the many, and even that to-day seemed not impossible.

"The part attracts me only too much ; although I loathe it, I am always longing while I am playing up to Mrs. Mostyn to show the people how Hester would really act. I only wish it did not seem to come so naturally to me."

"Of course you are," ignoring the latter part of her speech. "That notion of yours is only a kind of stage fright ; like it, it will soon wear off. Now," with a slight hardening of voice and face, "we must get to business," and then he plunged into the discussion of the necessary arrangements.

After he was gone, the girl threw herself back in her chair and, with her hands clasped behind her head, gave herself up for once to the full luxury of dreaming. The last half-hour seemed

to mark a new era in her life. She had promised to act Hester Blake ; she had agreed to leave this quiet, out-of-the-way nook, to go more out into the world. It would be a great change in her life. Was it possible that it might herald a still greater ? The sunlight filtered through the tender green overhead ; the shadow of the dancing leaves flickered over her upturned face and her eyes, at this quiet moment like two deep peaceful pools in whose depths the light slumbered. At this moment she was neither haunted by Hester Blake, nor picturing herself as the successful actress, the acknowledged artiste. She was merely a girl dreaming over again the old dream.

Whether or not it was the effect of one mind upon another, but Mr. Dighton, too, on his way back to town was thinking a good deal of Isabel Nugent. People often speculated on the connection between these two, and smiled significantly at the slightly fatherly touch which would sometimes appear in the manager's manner towards the young actress. The truth was simple enough. Twenty years ago nearly, Frank Dighton, destined then for the Bar, had gone to read for a long vacation at a lonely sea-coast parsonage. His "coach" had every talent but that of making use of those he possessed, and with all his scholarship and attainments, was as helplessly stranded and forgotten in that out-of-the-way place, as the last winter's wreck on the shore, that with every tide was settling deeper and deeper into the sand. Late in life he had loved and married, but here, too, fate pursued him. His wife had died, leaving him with the old-fashioned, precocious, wistful-eyed child, between whom and the pupil a great friendship presently sprung up. Next summer it was renewed ; then Frank left Oxford for London ; the current of his life changed, and in his early struggles and successes the memory of that quiet house on the lonely shore and the quaint little child, who had been so pathetically fond of him, grew dim and faded away. Years after it was suddenly revived when a tall slight girl appeared to seek a position in his company. Her haunting eyes awoke some vague recollections, and by-and-by she proved to be his child-love of long ago. Her father was dead ; relative or friend she had none. She had already gone through a hard apprenticeship in a provincial company. Would he help her ? Of course, he tried to dissuade her ; advised her to try any other way of getting a living, but ended by giving her a

very small part in which she could at least do no harm. He was soon forced to admit her talent, and from that day her progress was rapid, and had secretly astonished him. Not for the dearest and closest friendship, far less for the vague sentiment of an old memory, would Frank Dighton have committed any part—not even the smallest—into incompetent hands ; but it becomes both pleasant and profitable to befriend a *protégée* who shows such unmistakable signs of “coming to the front.” He prophesied confidently now of her future, and he was not the only one who predicted a bright career, a foremost place for her. He was fully satisfied with his morning’s work. He would lose a clever actress whose name was already assured, but he would be freed from a grasping, contentious woman. Isabel Nugent was in a sense his creation ; she would reflect infinite credit on his penetration and his training ; she would shed fresh lustre on the Original and its actor-manager. Would it be wise to draw the bonds closer ? Would friendship and gratitude be sufficient to secure her services ? It was not the first time the thought had crossed his mind. There was much in favour of a closer union. Mr. Dighton was well accustomed now to see beautiful eyes soften and fair faces flush at his approach, but somehow his thoughts turned with increasing pleasure to those hazel eyes that would glow golden at a kinder smile, a warmer word from him. He allowed those thoughts a few minutes’ indulgence, and then summarily dismissed them. His new arrangements were of more importance just now. The success of this new venture secured, there would be time to think of other things. The fruit hung well within reach. He might pluck it at his leisure.

* * * * *

“I hope Dighton knows what he is doing. It’s a great risk letting Mrs. Mostyn go.”

“You may pay too dear for anything or anybody. Dighton’s a cool chap. He won’t risk much.”

“H’m ! even the coolest may lose his head sometimes. This girl has done very well in smaller parts ; but to put her in Mrs. Mostyn’s place—of course, there may be other reasons,” with a laugh.

“Don’t think so. He’s not that sort. It’s himself and the Original first, and all else an uncommon long way after. No, he’d not risk the success of a piece to please any *chère amie*.”

“Miss Nugent will have some new frocks, at any rate. I am

sick of Mrs. Mostyn's red one and her black one ; besides, she is getting too stout for the style she affects. I wonder who makes these women's clothes. One wouldn't copy them, of course, but still one nearly always gets ideas. Really, if it were not for that I couldn't sit out those dismal plays."

"They say she means to give quite a new reading of the part, anyhow."

"Oh, then," in a tone of satisfaction, "she is sure to have new frocks."

These were a few of the comments, male and female, with which the stalls at the Original buzzed, before the curtain rose on the night of Miss Nugent's first appearance. Behind the scenes there was even more speculation and questioning, somewhat tempered among the ladies by the fact that each had been advanced a step by the departure of Mrs. Mostyn, though each, doubtless, privately held the opinion that she could have taken the place of *dame première* quite as well as "that Miss Nugent." Mrs. Mostyn had been no favourite ; she had been too haughty and overbearing ; Isabel, on the other hand, was too reserved, too dreamy and self-absorbed.

"Except when she's on the stage, she seems only half alive. I don't think she's quite aware of our existence. There's not a bit of the 'pal' about her," said Miss Chudleigh, the lively damsel who had been promoted to Miss Nugent's former part. "Dighton's fly enough as a rule, but I hope he knows what he's about this time. She made no great show at rehearsal."

It was true. Isabel's appearance had been rather a disappointment. Dighton refused to question the wisdom of what he had done. The excitement of the occasion, of an audience, would string her up, he said to himself. To-night, under all his calmness, he was devoured with anxiety. "Of the World, Worldly," was a one-part play, and that, in this case at least, not the actor-manager's. With Hester Blake, the play must stand or fall, and if Isabel Nugent failed him, not all the finished perfection of his acting or of the *ensemble* could save it. Worse still, he would be convicted of a gross error of judgment. But as he waited in his evening dress, for his part required no making up, to take his place in the first scene, no one could have imagined that there was anything unusual under that calm confident exterior. No, he could not believe that he was mistaken. At that moment

Miss Nugent came out of her dressing-room. Her dress was of almost barbaric splendour. As she advanced towards him, her tawny velvet, sable trimmed, trailing behind, her head high, her eyes glowing brighter than the topazes that incrusting the bodice of her gown and crowned her dark hair, misgiving vanished. His heart gave a strange leap.

"You are going to do honour to us all," he whispered exultantly.

"*To you,*" she murmured.

There was no time for more—the curtain rose.

There is no need to describe the plot of "*Of the World, Worldly,*" in detail. Plays of its class have been as numerous as they have been popular of late. Its heroine, of course, was the woman with a past, and its story was the Nemesis of the past. It was sumptuously staged, and no detail was omitted to render a complete picture of the society it represented—a society reckless, profligate, luxurious, madly extravagant, frantic in its scramble for pleasure as in its pursuit of any and every distraction. A society in which a Hester Blake can take a leading place, living an easy, splendid life, whose shame is hardly a secret, on the folly and dishonour of men, robbing a woman of lover or husband, a man of fortune and honour with cynical, practised ease.

From the rising of the curtain, Isabel's success was assured. Her dress and appearance impressed the women. "Too tall and thin, perhaps, but what a gown! and what an air! Mrs. Mostyn always looked vulgar and overdressed in the opening scenes."

Her consummate address struck the men. Dighton himself was surprised. He had expected power in the tragic close, but he was not prepared for her inimitable rendering of the cool daring, the graceful feline wiles, the adroit flatteries of a heartless, soulless woman of the world, in all the subtle charm of her baleful beauty.

"Is this Isabel Nugent?" he asked himself more than once in the course of the first act.

Then comes the late awakening. Hester is caught in the snare she has so often laid. Instead of conquering she is herself enslaved. The old life has grown loathsome. She makes a desperate struggle to cast it off, to win trust and esteem as well as love. For a time she almost succeeds; the man whom she fears almost as much as she loves him, believes in her, but the moral taint is too deep, the battle is too sore for her. She reveals herself as she is; the past, like the murdered corpse,

which old superstition believed that the earth could not cover, refuses longer to be hid. She learns at last the meaning of shame, and in her despair between the old life and the new, both now impossible to her, she cuts the knot in the only way left.

The great audience was hushed, every breath held, as that awful last scene was played out before them. The poor lost creature, unable longer to bear the burden of existence, and yet terrified to die—scourged out of life by her own actions into the black abyss from which heart and flesh shrink,—hesitating long, and snatching a desperate courage at last.

There was a long moment of dead silence when the one despairing shriek of vain repentance, of blank horror and utter recoil, had rung out, and the curtain fell. Then the pent-up feelings of the audience broke out in a roar of applause, such applause as had never before shaken the walls of the Original, since Mr. Dighton's very successful management began, nor ever before, probably.

The curtain was raised again on that lonely splendid figure lying prone on the empty lighted stage, and then, in response to the clamour, Mr. Dighton led forward the heroine of the evening. He was wholly himself again, the debonair, successful actor-manager, no longer Maurice Sundon, the wronged, cruelly-disillusioned husband, touched to mercy and forgiveness only when too late. As he led Miss Nugent to the front he was smiling a gay, gratified smile in response to the rapturous plaudits.

The woman beside him bowed again and again—that gracious, all-embracing stage bow—mechanically she curved her white lips to a smile, but she looked straight before her with awful unseeing eyes, in whose dark depths the horror still lingered.

“Jove! that woman's eyes make one creep; too real, don't ye know,” was one man's comment, repeated in many different ways, and then people said, “It had been quite too delightfully horrible,” and yawned and went away.

Isabel Nugent had made her mark. Next day every paper had its laudatory notice of her performance, and of the manner in which she had created anew a part already so well rendered by such a powerful actress. Where the critic was a friend or admirer of Mrs. Mostyn the praise was not so lavish, but it could not wholly be withheld. Isabel had other proofs besides those in the newspapers of her success. Invitations began to come

in from all quarters, though it was still early in spring, and the young, little-known actress, who had made a name for herself with such dramatic suddenness, bade fair to be one of the sensations of the coming season. She had already established herself in pleasant rooms in a more accessible quarter, and at Dighton's urgent advice began to go out more. As the season advanced he began to repent the counsel he had given. Isabel seemed bitten with a perfect fever for society, and from being rather a recluse was now to be seen everywhere. After her exhausting part at the theatre, she would go on to two or three houses, and the whole day was filled with lunches, at homes, garden parties, the thousand distractions of London in June. Dighton hoped she might tire of it, but, though the dark circles deepened round her eyes and she seemed to become thinner day by day, she carried on her double life with the same feverish energy.

Dighton, of course, was much in request, and often encountered Miss Nugent after the theatre, or went on with her to the same house. One July night, or morning rather, he was making his way through the still crowded rooms of a great house. The air was hot and heavy, and though he encountered acquaintances in scores, he felt too flat to talk.

"I must cut this sort of thing for the rest of the season, if I'm to hold on to the Original," he was saying to himself, as he turned into the lighted conservatory at the end of the suite. Here he might get a little coolness, and apparently quietness also, for it was deserted for the moment, save for a girl sitting alone at the further end. He stood for a moment, enjoying with a sense of relief the soft light, the tinkling fall of the fountain, the cool greenness, for the hostess had chosen to have only ferns and moss here, a contrast from the flowers that were massed in the rooms. Then he glanced at his companion. She was sitting opposite a mirror that multiplied the lights, the quivering maidenhair, the tossing water-drops ; but she was evidently not admiring the pretty vista, but intently studying her own face. With a slight sense of amusement he moved a little nearer, and then paused more startled than he liked to own. It was Isabel Nugent who sat among the silk cushions, but the face looking out of the mirror was Hester Blake's in the clutch of despair. He hastily made another step forward, and as his image fell on the glass, the expression vanished from her face and she turned round with a conventional smile.

"It is you, Mr. Dighton. I sent my partner, I forget his name, to get me something or other, so that I might have a little peace, and when I heard a step, I was inclined to say, 'Hast thou found me, O, mine enemy?'"

"I hope you won't look on me as such, though I'm going to make myself disagreeable; people who give advice always are, although you used to take mine sometimes. How long are you going to keep this up, Isabel?" The name slipped from him unconsciously, as he looked into her white tired face.

If she noticed it, she gave no sign. "I thought I was obeying your advice to the letter. You have always told me I was too much of the hermit," she answered in the same light, artificial tone.

"Yes, but I didn't advise you to burn the candle at both ends in this fashion. It is getting too much even for a strong man like me. I have just been registering a vow that I will stick to work and give up this sort of thing, which is infinitely harder, and I wish you would follow my example. Why, you have only to look at yourself," making a gesture towards the mirror.

"No, no, don't ask me to look at myself," with a shiver, which was perfectly genuine, though her tone was not; "I know I look a perfect hag." Then with a sudden change to passionate earnestness, "Will you let me give it up? Oh, if you would, then I would go away and be quiet—quiet—and find myself again."

"What, is success bearing its usual fruit? Am I to have another Mrs. Mostyn on my hands?" said Dighton, refusing to acknowledge the seriousness of her tone. "Why, at the most there is only a week or two of the season to run now. Hester is hard enough work, I know; but don't lay too much of the blame on her, poor woman. It is this endless racket, and not she that is wearing you out. If for the next week or two——"

"I can't, I can't," she said hastily. "It must be both, if I give up anything—— Oh! thank you so much; I am afraid I have given you a great deal of trouble." The last words were addressed to a tall fair young man who now appeared with an ice, and an apology for the unheard-of time he had been delayed.

Dighton walked home through the waning darkness, inveighing against the perversity of woman to cover his sense of uneasiness. Should he speak now, and assume the control the answer he expected to receive would give him over Isabel? He knew it was what he was longing to do, and even his well-controlled pulses

gave a sudden leap at the thought. But he conquered the impulse. A week or two would set them both free, and then—— The fact was he was by means so sure of his answer as he still thought himself to be. The girl did not respond to a word or a look as she had once done. She was so overwrought, so unlike herself, that a word now might spoil everything, and he had no wish to mar the future he had planned, nor to close the *Original* prematurely. If only Isabel would be sensible, give up harping on that foolish notion, and stay a little more at home, he concluded with almost marital irritation, as he put his key into his door.

Miss Nugent did not become more sensible ; but however listless, lifeless almost, she would seem on arriving at the theatre, she played with an even more consuming intensity than ever. Parliament sat late, the season dragged on through week after week of breathless, stagnant weather, and it was late August before the *Original* company was scattered for a brief holiday, after which it was intended to take "*Of the World, Worldly,*" for an autumn season in the provinces.

Isabel had gone to *Sleaford Sands*, where her lonely childhood had been spent. She had taken a longing to see the place again, she said ; besides, she wanted perfect quietness, and that at least was to be obtained there. Dighton, detained in town by multifarious arrangements for a day or two, determined to follow her as soon as he was free.

Seated in the train at last, steaming away seawards, he let all his usual preoccupations go by the board. London, the *Original*, Mr. Frank Dighton's success, were for once forgotten. He was a man going to the girl he loved, the one woman—and his experience had been tolerably varied—whom he had really desired as the companion of his days. He tried to laugh at himself a little, and then he let the sweet folly have its own way, and, leaning back in his corner, he dreamed like a lad of twenty of his love's hazel eyes.

From the nearest railway station, there was a long drive to *Sleaford Sands*, and it was late afternoon before he arrived. How little it was changed, he thought, as he left his inn, a very humble one, the post-office, where some musty groceries were sold, the tiny church and the deserted-looking parsonage behind him. These, with half-a-dozen cottages, formed the village, and beyond

it there stretched a wide flat, part waste land, part empty fields, where the poor crop had already been gathered. A house or two, each cowering behind a few scrubby trees, were scattered here and there at wide intervals, and in the nearest of these he was informed "the Lunnon lady," evidently an object of the utmost wonder and curiosity, was staying. On the other hand there spread out the endless sands, with the wider plain of sea beyond, dimly seen through the heavy grey haze that hung low over this lonely land, and seemed to shut it out still more from contact with the busy world of men.

Dighton's thoughts, as he hurried along the sandy road, were a curious mixture of the past and the present, and as he neared the house he half expected to see the child Isabel come racing to meet him, as she used to do, and throw her arms round him and press her innocent kisses on him.

The farmhouse reached at last, a depressed-looking woman informed him that Miss Nugent was out—she was always out. No, she didn't know where she was; somewhere on the sands likely; perhaps that was she, pointing to a moving speck away out on the brownish-grey expanse; she hoped it was, anyhow, as she had been keeping dinner for hours, and it wouldn't be fit to eat.

"It'll be him she was waiting on; maybe she won't be so mazed-like now he's come," was the woman's comment as she watched Dighton's dwindling figure.

"How did I contrive to exist here? It would drive me melancholy mad now," Dighton thought, as he went on over the oozy sands. No sound broke the windless hush, save the whisper of the far-withdrawn waters; the mist seemed to settle lower. Yes, it was Isabel. She was standing still now, looking away towards the grey ripples that were slowly creeping nearer. She started violently as Dighton came up, and he in his turn could scarcely utter a few words of greeting, so struck was he by the change in her appearance. Of late he had scarcely seen her, save at the theatre, made up for her part; now he felt as if he hardly knew her. It was not so much that she was pale and thin; that unhappily was nothing new; but her eyes, though feverishly bright, had a dilated, unseeing look. When she turned them towards Dighton he felt as if she were seeing not him, but some strange dreadful thing beyond him.

"Shall we walk on? Your worthy landlady is in despair about

you, and perhaps you don't know that there is a pool of water about your feet. It does not do to stand too long on those sands. I remember that from old experience." He tried to speak easily, but to his own ear his voice seemed to sound hollow and unnatural in the silence. Isabel did not speak, but she walked on beside him. "It is so strange to be here again," he went on. "I had my hand on the parsonage gate before I knew, and I shouldn't have been in the least surprised if a little girl who was very fond of me in those days, had come rushing out in her pinafore, and her hair all shaken out of her pigtail. That little Isabel was very kind to me then. Do you ever think of that time now? Do you remember——"

His halting speech was cut through by a sharp cry:

"Remember! Oh, my God, will I ever, ever be allowed to forget? But you—you—what is it to you? How dare you remind me?"

Dighton stared at her in utter blank consternation.

"Isabel, you are overtired, overwrought; I see now how merciless I have been, and this dreary place is too lonely for you," he said gently, trying to take her hand. "You will let me take you away. What is there in the past to distress you? It is very dear to me. I hoped that memory would plead my cause. You may have thought me slack and careless, dear, but those few days apart from you have shown me the truth. I can't live without you. I have come for you to-day; let me care for you. We will go away into the sunshine and forget——"

Again that awful cry:

"Forget! shall I ever forget? Some people say there is no forgetfulness; that we shall always remember. Do you think that can be true?" gripping him by the arm. "Shall I always be alive; never be able to escape from this horror that is *I—I?*"

"Isabel, my love——"

"Love—love—is there some one who still speaks to me of love? Ah, he does not know yet what I am; what I have made myself. But he will know—it is coming. I have tried, how I have tried to hide it——"

The words sounded strangely, hideously familiar. Like a bolt of ice it went to the man's heart—it was *Hester Blake* who was speaking, not Isabel. He stood dumb, as she poured out the passion of despair and agony to which his ears were so well accustomed, while the tide lapped in and in.

As he stood helpless while that thrilling voice filled all the twilight silence, far away in the utmost horizon the sun dipped down, a dull angry red, from under the rim of that heavy cope of grey cloud which had hidden it all day. Sea and sky were flooded with the sudden glare ; the haze hung crimson, every ripple was died blood-red, and broke in fiery sparkles on the sand. So startling, so ominous was the change, that for a second Dighton's eyes were forced away from the girl at his side. Then as a larger wavelet curled in and broke round their feet, instinctively he pulled her back.

"Let it come," she cried ; "it is what I have been waiting for. If it would only sweep me away and cover me up, and hide me away for ever. But it's no use—no use ! No water, not even the deep sea, can wash away what I have done and make me clean again. Would fire burn it out ?—they used to tell me of fire—the fire that never shall be quenched. See—see—see !" her voice rising to a shriek as she flung out her arms towards the sullen furnace-glow in the distant west, "it is kindled already ; it is seventimes heated ! It is waiting for me ; I am ready !" and she made a sudden wild plunge forward.

Dighton caught her almost roughly by the arm. He could bear no more.

"Isabel, this is madness ;" the words came involuntarily, without thought. Madness ! The word choked him even as he uttered it ; like a throttling hand it seemed to clutch him by the throat and force the horror that was the truth upon his shrinking heart. His blind selfish folly, his love, the anguish of his cruel loss had all for the moment vanished from his mind. They would return and scourge him soon enough, but now he stood stupefied. His arm fell numb by his side. She turned and looked at him—oh, the piteous change in those beautiful eyes—and then with a laugh that slew the last vain hope, if such were left him, she broke from him and darted away under the lurid, threatening sky, across the empty sands.

In the far west the red sun-rim was all but engulfed in the dark waters ; a last sparkle, the light faded, and darkness fell over sea and shore.

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When the Original Theatre Company started upon its autumn tour, "Of the World, Worldly," was, to the general disappointment, omitted from its *répertoire*, and Miss Nugent's name no longer headed the bills.

GORDON ROY.

John Biglow's Warning.

By RUSSELL SIDNEY.

YES! Aunt Susan was asleep! Asleep at last! After those many long weary days and nights of fever, pain and ceaseless restlessness, of hard-drawn, laboured breath, of muttering delirium and death-like unconsciousness! Now, at last, the poor, wan, fever-stricken features had relaxed, the tired haggard eyes had closed, the thin nervous hands no longer twitched aimlessly at the bed-clothes, the breathing was soft and regular, and a sleep, tender and peaceful as a little child's, had laid its soothing influence on the exhausted invalid.

Aunt Anna stood by the bedside watching her sister, with her hands clasped in silent, thankful prayer. Her gentle, loving eyes were dim with happy tears; an unspoken pæan of faith and praise surged up in her heart, and expressed itself in a voiceless refrain, "Thank God! Thank God!"

She repeated to herself the parting words of the old family doctor, as with more than his usual sympathy and earnestness of manner, he had bade her "Good-night."

"Remember, Miss Anna, this is the crisis. If your sister sleeps naturally for some hours, humanly speaking, her life is saved. It is rest she wants now, but I cannot give her a sedative; the case will not admit of it. Nature must be the chief restorer. Be careful, if she sleeps, nothing disturbs or awakes her suddenly. Good-night. God bless and keep you both, my dear."

The kind old man had been the nursery friend of their childhood. He had watched the twin sisters grow up to womanhood, and it grieved him sore to see one of his charges battling so long, and, at one time it appeared, so hopelessly, with an insidious form of low prostrating fever. Very near the dark river had his patient been; nearer, he knew, than her watching, faithful nurses had realized. He knew, too, that even now the faltering feet were only just off the brink; the cold relentless flood was still keeping very close, ready to overwhelm and bear her away to the Unknown Land.

Glancing at the clock, Aunt Anna saw it was just gone half-

past ten. Having completed noiselessly some necessary preparations for the night, she opened the bed-room door and, shutting it softly behind her, whispered the happy tidings to two anxious watchers, who, on the way to bed, waited for the last bulletin of the night.

"I shall of course sit up with her all night," said Aunt Anna, "and oh, Mary, keep the house quiet. Above all, tell the children and servants that not a sound must be heard in the morning; even if she does not sleep all night, she might doze off again early, and nothing must wake her. And, John," she added, turning to her brother-in-law, "could you have Rover tied up in the stables to prevent him barking at the milkman?"

The Reverend John Biglow, with his kindly, handsome face lighted up with pleasure on hearing, as he expressed it, that "Susan was out of the wood at last," gave the necessary promise that the dog should be effectually silenced; while his wife, as tremulous with joy and thankfulness as Aunt Anna herself, declared not a sound should be heard through the house till they were assured dear Susan was awake.

With a fond kiss the sisters parted for the night; and noiselessly once more Aunt Anna glided into the sick room, and glancing with loving eyes at the peacefully sleeping invalid, took up her station for the night in a big old-fashioned high-backed chair, chintz-covered, which stood by the bedside, with a small table close to her hand, where a small shaded lamp burnt, and a few medicine bottles lay within reach.

As she laid her weary head against the high back of the chair, her thoughts travelled over many subjects. She knew she had to keep awake; that was the supreme feeling uppermost in her mind. She had had many weary nights of watching before, in turns with her sister Mary and a hired nurse; but never before had such an overwhelming sense of the necessity for extreme watchfulness beset her. Her senses were strained to the utmost to detect and prevent any noise that might disturb the invalid. A nervous excitement gave her ears an acute sensitiveness; she listened for a sound when no sound was. She knew that when the sleep ended, nourishment must be given at once; and she kept going over in her mind what had been prepared for that end. Was all there? She felt anxious lest anything should have been forgotten; and peered through the dim light at the

jelly glass, the milk-jug, the cup of beef-tea, and other delicacies placed on a side table.

Yes! everything was at hand. Nothing was missing; and then her eyes rested on the still form in the bed. Her own dearly-loved twin-sister.

Now that all the busy part of the nursing seemed over; now that there were no fevered restless tossings to watch, no dried, parched lips to moisten, no unintelligible mutterings to fall upon the aching ear, she felt a sudden revelation come over her. She had been so busy before, so very anxious, so determined not to give way, to be always ready to do and to act, that she had had scarcely time to realize how very near, oh, how terribly near, she had been to losing the dearest being in the world to her. What would life have been worth without her? Could she have lived without Susan, her lifelong companion, the sister from whom she had never been parted—no, not for a day—who had shared every pleasure and sorrow of childhood and girlhood with her; whose thoughts, feelings and tastes were as a reflex of her own?

The most beautiful, the most perfect accord had always existed between the two sisters; to observers, remarkable and touching did this union of souls always appear, though outsiders were keen to notice what was never breathed in their inmost thoughts, because never suspected by either, that though there was perfect harmony, one mind held the key-note; it was the frail white invalid on the bed who swayed the destinies and wills of both. Unconsciously to herself, Aunt Susan was the guiding spirit; equally unconscious, Aunt Anna was led and influenced by her sister in the most trivial, as in the weightiest affairs of life.

No wonder, then, that her very soul recoiled and her heart stood still with suppressed emotion at the bare thought of what she might have lost; and even now, how much depended upon a few hours' undisturbed rest.

The silent tears coursed down her cheeks. "Oh, Heavenly Father, spare her to me! I cannot—I could not live without her!"

Poor frail human heart. How little does it know the finiteness of its wants, and the infiniteness of its capability for suffering.

"Susan is all the world to me," she murmured. "Of course there is dear old Mary, but she has John and the children; it isn't the same; we have only one another, Susan and I! My darling, darling sister!"

And then, strangely enough, her thoughts drifted away, far back into the mists of the past, to the happy days of childhood, when the three little sisters played together in the old manor house ; when Mary, always so much older and graver, led their games, and later on superintended their studies ; always more of the mother than the sister, fulfilling to the utmost the last injunction of a fair, fragile, dying woman, " Take care of my twin baby-girls, Mary ; take care of them, dear, for me."

Very deeply had those whispered faltering words sunk into the young girl's heart ; from that moment a new responsibility overwhelmed her ; from that hour she had put away " childish things ; " a quiet, earnest, perhaps slightly unintellectual mind from henceforth was influenced by one thought alone—how to do its best for the young helpless orphans, how most effectually to insure a mother's care over them.

Nobly and well had she carried out her task. Love and unselfishness had been her guiding angels, the mainsprings in the performance of all her self-imposed duties, and both twin-sisters revered and loved her as their wisest and best of counsellors.

Aunt Anna's memories then gathered round Mary's wedding. How well she recalled good, plain-spoken John Biglow coming to court Mary. The girlish jokes and innocent teasings, and the day, when smiling yet serious, with blushes on her fair placid face, she confided to the twins her willingness to be the mistress of the pretty country rectory, if—and the unselfish reservation was but a part of Mary's self—if the girls could do without her. She would be quite close to them ; could see them every day, but if they minded very much ; if they thought papa would be unhappy and miss her—why, then, of course—though there was a little suspicious choked utterance in the last brave words—she must give John up.

Dear old Mary ! How the younger sisters had laughed gleefully at her qualms. Why, a wedding ? and Mary's ? What could be better ? And to have her installed near them as the Lady Bountiful of the parish ; as the head of all the local societies ; as the organizer of every improvement, and the mainspring of all kinds of reforms in the village—it was too delightful !

And John ! They were quite ready to welcome him as a brother, a kind, elder brother ; just what they had always wanted. He was so straightforward, so genial and warm-hearted. No one

was more respected and beloved in the county, with the exception of their father, the old grey-headed squire, who would now be the twin-sisters' special care. So the wedding took place, and children's happy voices in a few happy years re-echoed through the old-fashioned garden of the Rectory, and in the dark oak-panelled rooms of the Manor.

It was always a mystery to the rectory children how it was possible that other poor unfortunate mites of humanity got through the vicissitudes of nursery life with only *one* mother; they, happy souls, had *three*—one big mother and two little aunt-mothers; the latter, perhaps, more inclined to be willing slaves and playmates than big mother, who was sometimes busy, and who had father as well to pay a little attention to, but all *mothers* in ceaseless care and devotion, in all the attributes of unselfishness and love. Then had fallen the deep shadow on those peaceful homes of the dear old father's death, just as the younger girls were blossoming into sweet, fair womanhood, and the three sisters were left co-heiresses of many a fruitful field and goodly acre. A decision had, however, soon to be made as to future plans. The manor house was to be sold. It was a large place for ladies to keep up, and the old squire, rightly or wrongly, as opinions differ, not having an heir, had judged that his daughters would be better without it. It was then that John Biglow had shone forth in his true colours. With a delicate sympathy for their sorrow, he forebore to mention business matters to his wife and her stricken sisters till the first burst of grief had passed, but when he knew delay was no longer possible, he placed before them his suggestions for their future.

His rectory doors he threw open to the twin-sisters as long as he lived, and if they liked to make it so, his house was theirs. There was plenty of room in the old-fashioned rambling house, and he would never let the three sisters be divided while it was in his power to keep them together.

Tears of thankfulness were in Mary's eyes; she had scarcely dared to hope that John would harbour such a suggestion; and rightly, she thought, that if such a plan were feasible, it should emanate from him, for she knew many hidden traits in John's nature; that open-hearted as he was, he had a true Englishman's feeling about the sacredness and privacy of home—to him it was more of a sanctuary than to most men—and that it must have cost

him something very dear to his inner consciousness to lay open all its innocent secrets to the ever-present scrutiny of outsiders, even though those were much-loved and appreciative sisters-in-law. She felt that in giving the twins a home he had given of his best. Aunt Anna recapitulated in her mind all the numerous kindnesses they had experienced from the warm-hearted rector during those many bygone years ; for it seemed a long time now since they had made the Rectory a common home. The children were fast growing up ; the first break had come in the schoolroom circle ; the eldest boy was at Rugby, and talking of Oxford at no distant time. But the aunts were still the chosen confidantes of various escapades, secrets and wondrous schemes among the young people—their willing helpers and loving sympathizers in all their joys and sorrows.

“ Ah ! ” sighed Aunt Anna, “ how happy the years have been ! How good John is always ! So helpful, so considerate ! What should we two helpless girls have done without him and Mary ! And the dear children, how bright they are ! So loving and attentive to dear Susan and me ! ”

She glanced involuntarily at the bed, as her thoughts dwelt on these remembrances ; and it struck her suddenly how silent the room was ; how very still and motionless the sleeper. She had not made a sign of life for many hours. An undefined terror took possession of Aunt Anna ; a fearful question rose in her heart and trembled on her white lips : “ Was she breathing ? Suppose—such dreadful things had happened before—suppose she had passed away for ever in that death-like sleep ! ”

With breathless anxiety she crept to the bed-side, and bent silently towards the recumbent form ; the regular breathing coming from slightly parted lips sent a thrill of overpowering joy through her veins, and feeling the reaction from that moment of agonized suspense telling upon her, she drew back and turned to the window, by some fresh scene to steady herself and regain her composure.

Drawing back a corner of the blind, she looked out on the Rectory garden, stretching down to a sunk fence, beyond which lay a field of some four acres prettily planted with firs and other trees, and skirted on two sides by a wire fence dividing it from the carriage drive, which, commencing at a white gate opening on to the high road, wound round to a second white gate shutting in the garden in front of the house.

All lay in a flood of unbroken moonlight. It was late in October, but very mild and close for the time of year ; the trees in many places had barely changed colour, though in others the damp and rain had denuded them of leaves and their outlines stood out gaunt, sharp and defined. The shadows were very dark and impenetrable, not a leaf stirred, not a sound broke the deathly stillness, and as Aunt Anna quieted her throbbing pulses by gazing on the tranquil scene, her eyes aimlessly followed the curve of the road, white and clear in the moonlight, and the thought crossed her mind, " How plainly one could see even the smallest thing coming along the carriage drive ! " But no vestige of life was visible ; the moonlight lay unbroken along the whole length. Tired with standing and in a serener mood, she turned at last from the window, and seeing by the clock that it was ten minutes to two, she lay back once more in the old arm-chair, and closing her eyes, fell asleep !

How long she slept she knew not, but she awoke with a frightened start as if some sudden noise had roused her.

Her first fear was for the invalid ; had she heard the noise ? No, thank God ! She was still sleeping tranquilly. But what was the noise ? She was certain she had heard, in an undefined manner, in her sleep, some unaccountable knocking or hammering. How strange that with all her care she should have closed her eyes and actually slept ! She would make sure such an inadvertence should not happen again, and straightening herself, she sat bolt upright in the chair. Why, what was that ?

Not, surely, some one knocking at the front door at that time of night ?

Her heart stood still. Yes, as she sat there with every sense on the alert, she heard loud distinct knocks on the oak panels of the old door. There was no knocker, but these were the thumps of a strong man's fist, and they seemed to re-echo through the silent house.

Without a fear as to who might be the inopportune night visitor, only overpowered with anxiety lest anything should awaken her sister, Aunt Anna seized the small night lamp and, hurriedly opening the door, passed swiftly out of the room, closing the door silently after her. Now the Rectory was an old-fashioned house, built on different levels. From the hall one ascended by a wide oak staircase to a lobby lighted by a mul-

lioned stained glass window, with deep recesses for seats in each corner, and before continuing the main flight of stairs, four steps to the left led to the twin-sisters' bed-room, a large, capacious, bow-windowed chamber, looking out, as before said, on the front drive and lawn. As, therefore, Aunt Anna crept down the four stairs, by looking over the banisters she saw directly down into the hall. As she peered into its shadows, holding her little lamp above her head, so as to shine more steadily, she was horrified at the sight of the hall door slowly and surely being pushed open from outside, and as it fell noiselessly back upon its well-oiled hinges, to perceive four men bearing some heavy burden between them, standing full and plain in the white moonlight flooding the carriage drive.

As the door opened to admit them, they prepared to bring in their load, and the slow measured tread of their heavy boots resounded on the tiled floor.

In an agony Aunt Anna bent over the banisters.

"Be silent!" she whispered under her breath. "Go away. Don't make such a noise. You must not awake her. You must not awake her."

The men seemed neither to hear nor regard her. They silently bore their burden into the hall, then turned the corner of the balustrade, and began to mount the stairs, coming slowly towards Aunt Anna.

Petrified she stood; the lamp fell on the men's faces. She knew them all; from childhood they had been familiar to her.

There was old Jim Bates, the village carpenter and joiner, and his eldest son, Tom, who had married a former maid of the sisters; Bob Evans, the wheelwright, who lived next door to the carpenter, was the third, and the fourth was old William Share, the sexton. Why did his presence send a further thrill of terror through her frame? In horrified apprehension she gazed at what they bore. It was an oak coffin with the brass plate and brass nails shining in, and reflecting back the feeble rays of the lamp, and she noticed with some strange feeling of instinctive relief that there was no name engraved on the plate. She recoiled terror-stricken before the approaching bearers, and as she did so, the fearful suggestion flashed upon her that they were bringing that gruesome burden for Susan, for her sister lying sleeping in the silent room beyond.

It was for her, and she was to die !

She turned and fled up the little flight of stairs, planting herself with the air of a lioness at bay in front of the closed door. As the men stumbled up the stairs with their heavy load, and, approached her along the little level part of the lobby, she held out imploring, despairing hands to them. "Go back !" she cried in an agonized whisper. "Go back ! Don't bring it here. In God's name, take it anywhere but here !"

They were close up to her now, and paused before her, the foremost with their feet already on the first small stair, and only held back by her attitude of defiance and entreaty. On all their faces was a look of solemn sympathy and unfeigned grief.

"You shall not come in here," she wailed. "Take it away ! Take it to some one else ! You shall not—must not bring it for her !"

And then slowly shaking their heads, the four bearers began slowly, to her inexpressible relief, to pass her by, and move quietly up the second flight of stairs to the long wide passage upon which opened the doors of the other bed-rooms. Almost facing the top of the stairs was the door of the rector's room, and it was before that door, when they had climbed the whole flight, that the four ghostly visitors deposited their dreaded burden.

Then they turned round ; solemnly and silently they descended the stairs, each one, as he passed Aunt Anna, touching his forehead in token of respect. With the muffled sound of their boots still echoing through the hall, they one by one disappeared through the front door, which Aunt Anna, peering over the banisters, saw the last shut behind him, the cold night air blowing chill and dank upon her face as he did so.

And then she awoke !

Awoke to find herself really standing in the lobby, looking over the banisters into the dark empty hall ; and the noise of the hall door shutting was the clatter made by the fall of the night lamp out of her hand, down on to the tiled floor below, where the wick still smouldered and spluttered among the *débris* of glass and spilt oil.

The rector's bedroom door opened a second after, and Mary, pale and terrified, came out, asking, "what was the matter ?"

"Oh, Mary," sobbed Aunt Anna hysterically. "I have had

such a dream, such a dreadful dream !] It was all so vivid ! But I would not let them bring it to Susan, and they laid it at your door. What does it mean ? what does it mean ?" she cried, wringing her hands.

Sensibly enough Mary did not press for an immediate explanation of this incoherent speech ; soothing her sister gently with her characteristic motherly way, she led her thoughts into another channel.

" Hush !" she whispered softly, " you will awake Susan. She is still asleep, I hope. You are over-tired and over-strained, poor darling. Go and lie down and I will watch by Susan."

Such a suggestion at once roused all Aunt Anna's latent energies ; already remorse smote her that she had left the invalid for a moment. Putting aside her sister she sprang up the stairs and softly opened the door. It was all dark, but the stillness assured her that the invalid still slumbered. She struck a light, and as she did so her eyes fell upon the clock ; it was just on the stroke of two. Her sleep, her terrible dream and her awakening, had all taken place in ten minutes from the time she settled down in the arm-chair after looking out of the window on the long desolate drive.

Mary, a moment after, crept noiselessly into the room. She looked with loving satisfaction at her sleeping sister, and then gazed rather anxiously at the watching one.

" Anna," she said gently, " you are over-tired. If you will not let me remain till morning, you must promise to take three or four hours' complete rest to-morrow as soon as the nurse comes. I'll go back to bed now. I am so glad the fall of the lamp did not awake John. He was so anxious about Susan and could not sleep. He had only just dozed off when I heard that clatter."

With a loving embrace the sisters separated, and Aunt Anna resumed her interrupted vigil, which was not further disturbed till three o'clock, when the invalid awoke refreshed and hungry, actually taking with relish the dainties prepared for her. Then with a little sigh, like a contented child, she turned on her side and fell gently asleep again.

The grey dawn found the patient watcher still wakeful and on the alert. Though the feeling uppermost in her mind was one of supreme thankfulness for what she now considered her sister's certain recovery, the weird vision of the night depressed

and dismayed her. Why had she dreamt it, and why should it have been so real, so distinct that she had actually taken up the lamp in her sleep and walked out of the room with it, closing the door after her? Why had the coffin been placed at John and Mary's door?

Was it for either of them? She shuddered as her wild words re-echoed in her ears:

"Take it to some one else. Take it anywhere but here!"

Why had she said, "Take it to some one else?" The words seemed to bear a sinister import; she ought to have been content with telling those fearful men to bear it out of her sight, out of the house—anywhere.

She was not superstitious, had no faith in presentiments, but even as the day advanced and the sun, bright with gold light dispelling the autumn mists and night shadows, peeped in at the window, with health-giving rays, she still felt the glamour of the night-vision very distinctly upon her; her mind and nerves seemed unhinged and despondent.

When the nurse came up from the village at eight o'clock to take her share of duties for the day in attendance in the sick-room, she escaped to the freedom of the other part of the house with a sense of relief she had not before experienced.

She was glad, too, when breakfast was ready, to see John and Mary enter the dining-room. John, broad-shouldered, burly and hearty; Mary, comely with a matronly plumpness of contour, both looking robust and substantial enough to frighten away a battalion of ghosts.

"Well, Anna," was John Biglow's greeting, "you still look rather scared with this terrible dream, Mary tells me, you awoke the household with last night. And after begging us, too, not so much as to breathe. It was too bad."

"I have not yet heard what the dream was," remarked Mary, as she poured out the coffee. "Do tell us, dear, what frightened you so much, and what was brought to our door."

Aunt Anna glanced nervously around; a rather anxious expression came into her eyes.

"Don't laugh, John," she said entreatingly; "it was a horrid dream, a terrible dream, and it was all so real. I can see it even now," and she covered her face with her hands as if to shut out the ghostly vision.

"Here, dear, take some coffee and an egg. Don't let her tell it now, John ; wait till she has had some breakfast. She must rest afterwards, or we shall have her ill next."

"Well, mother," replied the rector, attending studiously to Aunt Anna's wants, and afterwards helping himself to a plentiful supply of ham ; "to turn to more substantial stuff than dreams are made of, you must not expect me home to lunch to day. I am on the bench with Charrington and Sir John to try the poaching case in which you know that scoundrel, old Jacob's son, is mixed up. It will go hard with him this time. Evelyn's gamekeeper had a narrow squeak of his life in the fray with that low, drunken fellow. They are all a bad lot and a disgrace to the neighbourhood. I wish they were well out of the place."

"Take care, then, you have lunch somewhere, John dear," said Mary, ever mindful that when engrossed in more important matters, the rector was prone to neglect the wants of the inner man, and suffered accordingly afterwards. If not well looked after when busy he would often go without food from breakfast to late dinner, and a drawn, haggard expression upon his otherwise florid countenance betrayed his forgetfulness of minor comforts. It was the only trait in her husband's character that ever gave Mary a moment's anxiety.

"All right, dear, I'll not forget number one to-day ; for, as it happens, the good old doctor, knowing I was on the bench, booked me for his luncheon hour. Somewhere about two, I think he said, and I shan't have much time to get there if we are kept long over Jacob's case."

"Mary," asked Aunt Anna, who had been toying in a pre-occupied manner with her breakfast, and now spoke in a low, nervous voice, "do you believe dreams can be sent as a warning ? Can they be sent for any end ?"

"Why, Anna, are you still in the land of dreams ?" laughed John Biglow, before his wife could answer the query put to her. "Come, out with it. Like all women, you are burning to tell us all particulars, and can't rest in peace or eat your breakfast till you have unburdened yourself. What was your vision ? and then I will give my opinion as to its potential warning."

"Only don't joke about it, John, please," petitioned Aunt Anna, still tremulous, and then she recounted her strange dream of the

past night. Mary shuddered and paled a little when she heard the men's burden had been laid at her bed-room door.

"Oh! John," she exclaimed, trembling, "surely it cannot mean——" then she stopped, for her husband held up his hand with a motion to impose silence.

"Let us hear to the end," he answered.

There was little more to tell, and Aunt Anna lay back in her chair when she had finished the recital, saying, "Now, John, can you, can any one, tell me why I should have dreamt a horrid thing like that?"

Honest John Biglow passed his hand through his iron-grey hair and then over his bushy, carefully-trimmed whiskers; his face bore a subdued expression of amusement, kept in check by the serious manner of the narrator and the unexpressed anxiety of his wife.

"Well!" he answered, after a moment's pause, turning his kind brown eyes first upon one face and then on the other, "I consider this terrible vision very easy of explanation. Anna was over-tired, her nerves were strained with anxiety and watching, she was therefore very susceptible to outward influences. You do not remember, either of you, I daresay, that yesterday evening after dinner, just before Anna went off to Susan's room for the night, Carter came in to say old Samson's funeral was finally fixed for Saturday, and I remarked to Mary that for such a poverty-stricken family they were going to a great deal of expense ordering an extra-thick oak coffin; and how Mrs. Samson had told me with some pride, when I called to see her in the afternoon, that the brass plate would be 'real handsome!' Poor soul! she appeared to derive some comfort and satisfaction from the bare idea of spending more on the old man in his coffin than she had ever dared to devote to his wants in his life-time. Though you did not take much notice at the time, Anna, the words were, if one may so say, photographed on your memory, and came out in a bizarre form in your few moments of unconsciousness. Then I had mentioned old Share the sexton as being rather cantankerous about the site of the grave; that accounts for *his* appearance, and as he is often in the company of the three others, in fact oftener than I like in the neighbourhood of 'The White Feathers,' it is not surprising they should be together in your dream. As to the noises," continued the rector, "who has

not heard the most inexplicable sounds in the silence of the night? I, for one, have been startled by that old oak wardrobe of yours, Mary, giving forth the most terrific and ghostly groans, creaks and squeaks in the dead of night; and probably it was some article of furniture in the room relieving itself by a more than ordinary paroxysm that, to your sensitive ear, Anna, was magnified into those portentous knocks appearing to wake you from slumber. Your little experience in somnambulism was but the outcome of your over-strained nerves and the acute tension of your senses reacting upon your body and controlling its movements. These common-place facts explain the matter of your dream clearly enough. Now, *why* you dreamt it appears equally plain," and the rector spoke gravely, with sympathetic kindness. "You were, my dear girl, with all of us, suffering under a great anxiety for dear Susan; it must have been in your mind, as in ours, that death was very near her last night. It lay in God's hands whether she would be spared to us or no. Everything, humanly speaking, depended on her rest being undisturbed; it was therefore natural that even in sleep your mind should still retain the fear of any noise, and when old Samson's coffin came stumping up the stairs, you naturally expressed stern disapproval of such an eccentric proceeding."

"But they left it at your door, John! Why did they not take it away altogether?"

"I cannot answer for the reasons of all your ghostly visitors' ambiguous actions," replied John Biglow smiling; "but knowing both Bates' and Evans' inherent laziness, I should say they showed their wisdom in putting down what must have been a pretty stiff load, at the first door they came to, and I have no doubt the two others were equally pleased at not having the trouble of taking it back to the village."

"John," said Aunt Anna reproachfully, "you are making fun of it after all."

"No, Anna, not at all. But do not let your thoughts dwell any longer on empty visions; there is too much in this work-a-day world to engross our best attention, and also," added the rector reverently, "to lay claim to our deepest feelings of gratitude. Dear Susan is spared to us, through God's mercy; and having given us such a direct answer to our prayers, surely we can leave the rest to Him, always remembering that living or dying we are the Lord's."

His voice sounded deeper and fuller than usual, and in the silence that followed there was a suspicious moisture in his listeners' eyes, but with a bright smile he looked affectionately at his wife with his kind brown eyes, and nodded his head reassuringly at her once or twice :

"Yes, Mary, if I don't come home to the minute this afternoon, you are not to think that Anna has killed me with poor old Samson's coffin. I shall send back the dog-cart by Wilkins, and walk home ; or maybe I shall get a lift part of the way with Sir John. I have several things to attend to in Spalding to-day. There is the school-inspector—I must have a talk with him about the rates ; they are much too high. I have to see Smith about the sale of that bay, and I am sure I don't know if it wouldn't be best after all to turn the long acre field into pasture next year. I must have a chat with Tidmarsh and get his opinion." For, like many parsons, the rector farmed his glebe, and found it by no means a paying concern.

Aunt Anna left the room brightened and invigorated. She felt in the presence of that calm, steadfast man, full of the duties of life, busy and thoughtful for others, that vague fancies and nervous fears were incongruous, and with lightened heart she paid her daily visit to the nursery and schoolroom, to repeat to sympathetic hearers the glad news of Aunt Susan's health-restoring sleep. Afterwards, at Mary's urgent request, she went into a quiet, cosy bedroom and lay down to rest. Just as she was dropping off to sleep she heard the dog-cart with her brother-in-law driving off from the hall door, and she listened dreamily to the departing wheels, as they glided smoothly over the long carriage-drive.

When she awoke it was luncheon time. The doctor had been and pronounced his patient progressing more favourably than he had expected ; he would, however, call again late in the evening, as she was still very weak, and might require stronger stimulants than he had yet ordered.

"The dog-cart, too, has come back," added Mary, giving all the morning's news, as she divided her attention between her sister and the large joint she was carving for many hungry applicants, for luncheon was the children's dinner-hour, and all the small fry were gathered round the table.

"Wilkins says his master told him he would be detained till late in the afternoon, so we were not to be anxious about him.

Dear old John! how careful he is of us! So thoughtful for all our little fears and womanish feelings!"

In Mary's eyes there never was and never could be a greater hero than plain John Biglow! Perhaps she was right in the main; for of such large sympathetic natures and honest determined wills, self-sacrificed in the path of duty, are the world's noblest heroes made.

The day passed quietly on; slowly the sun sank behind a bank of violet clouds, and the quickly-gathering autumn twilight fell around. Aunt Anna and Mrs. Biglow were standing together in the sick chamber, the invalid was lying calmly resting; the nurse busied herself tidying the room, and in making her preparations for the night, while the two sisters stood in the bow-window looking out upon the drive. Mary was repeating her determination to stay up that night with Susan while Anna had a complete rest, when the latter suddenly exclaimed, at the same time catching hold of her sister's arm to attract her attention:

"Look, Mary, there's a light spring cart with four men just driving in at the white gate!"

It was the further gate, and the two women at the window watched it wending its way rapidly towards the house, with a silent fascination. The short October twilight had faded so rapidly that it was already nearly dark, too dark for them to distinguish the men's faces. As the cart stopped at the front door, Mary peered down into the drive, but the vehicle and its occupants were too immediately underneath for her to be able to see anything further.

"How strange!" she murmured, "that they should come to the front door. What can it be? I will just run down, Anna, and see."

She quickly left the room. A moment after Aunt Anna heard the hall door open, and a smothered sound of voices, a faint cry, and a man's voice calling for a light.

It was still comparatively early, and the hall lamp was not lighted. The nurse had just put a match to a little hand-lamp, a fac-simile of the one broken in the catastrophe of the past night, and Aunt Anna, snatching it up, hastily ran out of the room with it in her hand. An undefined fear took possession of her; she looked over the banisters before she went further down the stairs with a nameless expectation of disaster, and what she saw froze her terror-stricken to the spot.

It was the realization of her dream of the previous night ! There were the four men, and they were carrying slowly and painfully a heavy burden between them into the dimly-lighted hall. Mary was crouching white, speechless and horrified in a corner ; the men passed her with pitying glances and slowly ascended the stairs. As they laboured up the light fell upon their faces. They were Jim Bates, the carpenter, and his son Tom ; Bob Evans, the wheelwright, and old Share, the sexton ; but the burden they bore was not a coffin, it was the body of a man placed hastily on a hurdle, and as the handkerchief which had been thrown over the head fell upon the ground, Aunt Anna looked on the white calm face of her dead brother-in-law, John Biglow !

Yes ! the dream had come true ! and in at the door where the night before she had seen them lay the coffin, the four living men carried in the earthly remains of the rector.

They told their story afterwards to the sorrow-stricken household. By the roadside, as if he had thrown himself down in a sudden paroxysm of pain, with his hand clutching tightly the vest over his heart, they had found on returning from Spalding market, where they had driven in the wheelwright's light cart, the body of John Biglow ! His face bore no trace of pain, only a slight contraction of the temples and about the lines of the mouth.

More particulars came to light later on. How the rector had hurried from one place to another that day ; how by some misadventure he had not been in time for the doctor's lunch, and had gone without breaking his fast, declaring he would make all the better dinner at home ; how Sir John Evelyn had driven him, late in the afternoon, to the cross roads, and thinking he looked fagged and tired, wished to drive him to the Rectory ; how the rector would not hear of taking Sir John out of his way ; and how the last seen of him, was waving his hand in a smiling farewell as he turned to toil up the long steep ascent of Great Norton Hill. At the top, among the autumn flowers and rank grass of the roadside, he had laid himself down and died.

Ah ! the pity of it !

And who can interpret Aunt Anna's dream ? Was there a warning in it ? Was it a note of alarm from the shadowy shore of that unknown country whose portals are called Death ?

These things are hid from our eyes.

An Unanswered Summons.

THE event I am about to record happened on the twenty-fifth of December, 18—. It is my wish to narrate it simply. I noted the facts down at the time, and in chronicling them I allow myself no exaggeration. Nor do I pose as a believer in the supernatural, being by nature practical. A man of different temperament might find pleasure in dwelling on so important an incident in his life; with me it is otherwise. My time is fully occupied, I have little leisure for thought, nor am I of a nature to take delight in such researches as are pursued by the Psychical Society. The theory of the dual consciousness has no attraction for me; idealistic philosophy is not in my line; I am not concerned about a transcendental self. Briefly, I lay no claim to any higher aspirations than to increase my practice (it is already considerable), to do my duty by my patients, and to provide somewhat more lavishly for my wife and children.

I am pre-eminently a family man; I believe in the sacredness of the marriage tie, and in the responsibilities of parents. In point of fact, I am a fair type of a modern Englishman in that respect, whatever neurotic novels may say to the contrary. My wife, who is at the present moment sitting opposite me, busily stitching at some dainty garment for one of the youngsters, is beautiful in my eyes still, but I hesitate to say how others may view her. At the time I married her, however, no man in his senses would have ventured to dispute her charms; they were undeniable. It pleases me at this moment to relate how, when and why I came to woo her. I offer no explanation; a subtler brain may supply one, or, as is more probable, my recital may be met with derision. Still, facts remain; they can neither be explained away, nor can they be set aside by simple, barefaced contradiction. For my want of literary style I do not apologize. I am but a plain medical practitioner; I can diagnose a case as well as most men; if I do so unsatisfactorily I submit to criticism, but I am no story-teller. Yet it pleases me to unburden my mind; though none, I take it, are compelled to read, should the process fail to interest them, or the manner of it grate on their fastidious taste. Having little capital at my command, and small spirit for speculation, I did not commence my career by buying

a practice in a populous neighbourhood ; on the contrary, I elected to settle down in a small country town, which we will call, for present purposes, Hamsworth. There were but two doctors in the place ; one was a homœopath, the other an allopath. From the former I flattered myself I had little to fear, the latter was growing old, and had an extensive practice, since there was no rival in the field. Two years before a certain Paul Rattray had also practised in the town, so I was told ; but his skill was small and his habits unsteady ; he had made a moonlight flitting, leaving nothing behind him but a bad reputation and many debts. I inquired where he had lived ; oddly enough the house was at that moment to let. I went over it at once, and after a few hours' consideration took it, finding the rent within my means. I never had cause to regret the step.

To sit down and wait for patients is not inspiriting ; this I found, to my cost, but I was by temperament optimistic, and I made the time pass by dint of constant occupation. It was not often that I was low-spirited, or meditated on my loneliness ; but the twenty-fourth of December found me, I must confess, somewhat blue. I sat hovering over the fire, succeeding in warming my feet, but feeling an unpleasant draught at my back. The weather was exceptionally cold, I was unconscionably tired ; I rose with sudden resolution, and went upstairs to bed.

I had visited all my patients that day ; they were six in number ; I had no right to be either mentally or physically exhausted. If I had been asked what I most desired at that particular moment I think I should have said an epidemic ; yet I was a merciful man, and fond, in a mild way, of my fellow creatures.

I slept soundly until two in the morning, when I found myself sitting upright, listening intently. Some one was calling through the speaking tube. I sprang out of bed and listened. At first I could not catch the words. "Say it again," I shouted. The sentence was repeated slowly and distinctly, "Come at once, she is dying." No address was given, the omission did not make any impression upon me. For this I cannot in any way account ; I was neither agitated nor excited. I dressed rapidly, hurried downstairs, closed the street door behind me and looked around. The wind was piercingly cold ; I shivered. The night was clear and starlit. In the full glare of my red lamp stood a woman. She was of medium height, and her figure, a singularly grace-

ful one, was enveloped in a fur-lined cloak, the hood of which covered her head. She glanced over her shoulder ; her face was white as death, her eyes gleamed, though the lids were swollen from weeping. I could see her so distinctly that I even observed a scar on the left temple. Soft curls of brown hair lay on her forehead. I was a doctor, eager for a new case ; but I was human, her beauty attracted me irresistibly. I advanced and would have spoken to her ; she did not appear to be aware of my presence, but ran on swiftly, and I followed. It was all I could do to keep her in sight, so rapid was her pace ; the wind blew fiercely, making progress difficult. The way was long ; we left the town behind us and crossed a barren common, never slackening our speed. I was not sorry when she paused before the door of a lonely cottage, the walk had not been too pleasant. I passed my hand over my stinging eyes ; the gesture was rapid and mechanical, occupying, so it appeared to me, but a fraction of a second, yet my guide had disappeared. I was alone. I shook myself as though I had slept, and would cast off a strange dream, but was sufficiently wide awake withal, and not over pleased at my position.

However, it was incumbent on me to enter the house to which I had been so urgently summoned. A light was burning in an upper window, presumably that of the apartment occupied by my future patient. I knocked, but no one answered me. Then, I found to my surprise that the door was on the latch. Without giving myself time for consideration, acting, as had been the case throughout, on impulse, in a way foreign to my character, I walked upstairs and stood outside the door of the room wherein I had seen the light burning. I cannot in any way account for that or for my subsequent conduct ; I set it down as it occurred. I stood and listened. For a few moments the silence was complete. Presently I heard words already familiar to me. "Come at once, she is dying." They were followed by others, uttered in heartrending tones : "No, no, he will not come !"

I entered the room unhesitatingly ; it was small and barely furnished, but in perfect order, and not without traces of refinement. On the narrow bed lay a girl ; her face was turned towards me, her eager eyes interrogated mine. I recognised her at once ; the features were sufficiently remarkable to have impressed themselves on my memory ; the scar on the left temple was not required to strengthen my conviction ; it was already sufficiently strong. I

stood and gazed down upon her, utterly at a loss to understand the situation ; her cheeks were flushed, her breath came short and quick ; she wore a nightdress frilled at the throat and wrists. I glanced round the room, but saw no traces of the fur-lined cloak in which she had been wrapped so recently. Had it been there the mystery would have been equally insoluble, as sufficient time to effect a change of attire, however rapid, had not elapsed.

As I bent over her, she raised herself, laid her hand on my shoulder, and said in reproachful accents.

"You are too late, she is dead ! Look at her eyes how they stare at you ; look at her stiff lips, they are speaking to you now. ' You might have saved me,' they say, but you would not come ; you could sleep while a fellow creature was in agony. God forgive you. I never can."

She pointed with her finger to a farther corner of the room ; but I saw nothing. I knew that she was delirious, yet her words affected me strangely.

With the instinct of my profession I endeavoured to detach my attention from all that was extraneous, and to concentrate it on my patient. I found her to be suffering from pleurisy ; the case was undoubtedly a serious one. I rang the bell without receiving any answer. I then took upon myself to make a room-to-room visitation throughout the house. Owing to its limited size this task was soon completed, and it became evident to me that, strange as it might seem, my patient and I were its sole occupants. There was some wood in the grate, I lit a fire as quickly as I was able ; the room was very cold and I felt that it was important to raise the temperature at once. Then I sat down and waited patiently for a few moments, turning over in my mind what I had best do next. I had not much time for consideration. Before long the door was opened gently, and an elderly lady, wearing a bonnet and shawl, appeared on the scene. She showed a surprise that was not unwarrantable at my presence.

"Dr. Haviland, I believe," she said.

I bowed assent.

The words that followed took the form of a question.

"How did you know of my niece's illness ?"

I was puzzled. To say that the invalid herself had fetched me was to arouse in my interrogator's mind the suspicion that I was insane ; therefore, I made an intentionally incoherent reply.

She was excited and anxious, it was on this account, I presume, that she allowed it to pass. I ascertained that her niece had been ailing for a few days, and had gone to bed at eight o'clock. At one, Mrs. Morris, who slept in an adjoining room, had been alarmed by hearing her speak in an excited tone. Being unused to illness, and evidently not particularly strong-minded, she had, on discovering her condition, at once run distractedly for Dr. Field, the elderly practitioner already alluded to, but had not found him at home. She had hesitated whether to fetch me, but fearing what might happen in her absence had returned at once.

On inquiring whether Dr. Field was their regular medical attendant, she informed me that neither she nor her niece troubled doctors much, and I observed a certain shortness in her manner which discouraged further enquiries. Nor was I, for my own part, desirous of making any, my only object being to avoid transgressing professional etiquette.

I endeavoured while giving my orders to Mrs. Morris to quiet some of her alarms, although I could not reconcile it with my conscience to hide from her that this was a serious case, which would call forth all the skill of the nurse as well as that of the doctor. Others of my profession have more faith in trained nurses than I, or maybe less faith in the services prompted by a loving heart, which can make clumsy fingers expert and dainty. A few words with Mrs. Morris convinced me that she was devoted to her niece. I looked into her troubled eyes, I watched the tremulous mouth settle into firmness, and I decided in my own mind that she would be able to attend to her satisfactorily. The sequel proved that I was not mistaken.

She and I, God helping us, fought a hard battle with death; sometimes his grim arms seemed about to close around the fair girl who lay so patiently, too weak to speak, but always ready to smile on us in grateful acknowledgment of our slightest services; sometimes our hearts sank within us. But at last the glad day came when I could pronounce her out of danger, and I think I shall never forget how I felt. I feared lest my joy should be too apparent, I dreaded lest the story of my love should be written on my face so plainly that all who ran might read. For I was but a matter-of-fact man, and it appeared to me absurd that I should have parted with my heart so readily. Nay, I even struggled against fate, feebly and spasmodically,

until the time came when it was no longer possible. I told myself that I was in no position to marry, least of all to marry Mary Morris, who had not a penny in the world, for I had ascertained that she was a daily governess, earning the miserable pittance conferred on educated labour. But a spell seemed to be cast over me, I was as one enthralled ; as blindly as I was led on the morning of the twenty-fifth, was I led now. I was hopelessly in love with a woman who was in so sore a bodily strait as to be hardly aware of my presence. When she was fully conscious, when we two conversed together, I accepted the fact without demur ; I realised that the hand of fate is too powerful for man to set aside.

It happened on the twentieth of January. We were alone together ; Mary sat in an easy chair, and I had held her slender wrist a little longer than was absolutely necessary for professional purposes. She was moved that afternoon to speak gratefully to me, making more of my poor services than I thought fit, though it was pleasant enough to listen to her praises. The light was waning, the firelight fell on her face, casting a red glow as my lamp had done on that eventful evening.

A longing to question her seized upon me, but I felt that I must wait a little longer, I feared to try her strength. We were silent for a short space, presently she spoke.

"I shall always be grateful to you for attending me," she said gently, "but you have never explained how it happened. And you know, Dr. Haviland, you are about the last doctor in the world my aunt or I should have sent for, since you are Dr. Rattray's successor."

"But what of Dr. Rattray?"

"If you had asked me a month ago I should have told you that I hated him," she replied ; "but I have been so close to death that I cannot say it now. I hate none."

"How did Dr. Rattray offend you?" I asked, for I dreaded further questioning, and I felt that it might be averted by carrying the war into the enemy's camp.

She pushed her hair from her forehead, a gesture with which I was now familiar.

"I loved my mother very dearly," she said, "she was all in all to me. I think I would have given my life for her; but her health was frail. When we came here as utter strangers, I, in my ignorance, called in Dr. Rattray. On Christmas Eve, two years ago, my mother was seized with a sudden attack of syncope. She and I

lived alone, as my aunt and I live now. I had no neighbour whose aid I could seek. The weather was intensely cold. I took a fur-lined cloak of my mother's, threw the hood over my head, and ran for the doctor. I spoke to him through the tube."

She paused, her eyes were moist, her lip trembled, yet I could not keep silence. I was too anxious for information.

"What did you say?" I asked breathlessly. Yet I knew without asking. The words had recurred to me over and over again since Christmas Eve. She clasped her hands together, her lips were set firm, but her answer came at once.

"When I blew down the tube," she said, "he asked who was there. After I had told him, I said, 'Come at once, she is dying.' He promised me he would, but he never came; he fell asleep again, and my mother died for want of medical aid."

The flush had faded out of her cheeks; with a woman's tact she strove to master her emotion, feeling, doubtless, that the position was a strained one for me.

"Dr. Rattray was a disgrace to his profession," she continued; "he did not care whether his patients lived or died, so long as he could drink his fill. I shall never forgive myself for having chosen him as medical attendant for my dear mother. But," she added more lightly, "you have not told me how it is I had the good fortune to secure your services. My aunt herself is puzzled. She tells me you arrived in her absence. She went for Dr. Field, you know."

I strove to answer, but in vain; words failed me, my embarrassment could not be concealed.

"Tell me!" she said gently, leaning forward with her hands lightly clasped together, and her face upturned.

I did so, plainly and straightforwardly, keeping nothing back. After I had spoken a hush fell upon us both. The weirdness of the incident I recorded could not be ignored by the most practical of minds.

"I do not understand," she said slowly.

"And I have no explanation to offer," I replied.

The situation is the same now as then. It is Christmas Eve, and my wife and I sit together by our own fireside. We still inhabit the house once tenanted by Paul Rattray. Night after night messages reach me through the speaking tube, sometimes more persistently than I could wish, but they are of a prosaic order. For that which came to me on the morning of December 25th, 18—, I have no explanation to offer. I do not understand.

L. E. TIDDEMAN.

A Country House in Andalusia.

THE sun had been shining all day long on an old courtyard which formed the entrance to a country house in Southern Spain; vines and creeping plants draped the massive stone walls, and flowers were blooming here and there in haphazard disarray. The building itself, a huge structure, looked much more like a ruined fortress than the dwelling place of an English family, and was situated outside a small provincial town, some five miles or so from the mines which were its *raison d'être*. In the Cathedral hard by the Christian ritual has long since replaced Moham-medan rites; at the fountain beside it the faithful no longer perform enforced ablutions, but Tobalito, the water-carrier, gay in his striped and tasselled mantle, might be found instead, gossiping with some of the gipsies, a group of chattering girls washing the vegetables for dinner, or the family linen, according to the hour of the day.

Tobalito's pictorial value was high, undoubtedly, but his ways were very aggravating; sometimes when he brought in the drinking water for the day's consumption—which had to be sought a mile off—he would lead his donkey right into the great hall and up to the dining-room door, so as to save himself the trouble of carrying the beautiful great white jars which were slung on its back; usually that much-enduring animal would slip on the threshold and the result would be a deluge of water on the carpet. After such a catastrophe Doña Carolina, the house-mistress, was apt to remark that for her part she preferred the practical to the picturesque, but that was only—as her husband, Don Henrique, often assured her—because she had no proper sense of the fitness of things; indeed Tobalito had no idea that he was picturesque. His real name was Cristobal.

In the courtyard of the house where Doña Carolina lived, a family party was assembled, and most of its members had thrown themselves down in attitudes suggestive of a desire for repose after considerable exertion of some kind. They had not been doing anything in particular, however; they were merely giving way to the climate, for though the month of April had scarcely run its course, the air was still and warm, and heavy with sweet scents from a neglected-looking garden belonging to the house,

where flowers and weeds had tangled themselves together in a fashion infinitely more effective than the most carefully cultivated series of beds that ever gladdened the heart of an English horticulturist. One person in the group had declined to succumb to the prevailing languor and indolence, for she was wide awake and knitting industriously; her rosy cheeks and simple attire formed a great contrast to the appearance of the other members of her sex, whose pale faces and voluminous draperies betrayed the influence of a hot sun and a Spanish dressmaker. She had only just arrived from an English home to pay a long visit to her cousins, and it was her birthday which was being celebrated. "If these good people imagine this is the way to keep a birthday," she was saying to herself, "I think it is my duty to undeceive them as soon as possible," and she turned to her nearest neighbour, an Englishman about thirty or so, who was smoking a cigarette with half-closed eyes.

"If you are not too sleepy, Mr. Irving, will you wake up and tell me what you do here when you amuse yourselves, or am I to suppose that this kind of thing always goes on when there is a saint's day and you have a little leisure time?"

The person addressed raised himself and regarded her with an amused glance.

"Tennis, do you mean, and that kind of thing? Well, it is too warm now, but if you like riding, we can take you up to the Sierra during the next three or four weeks, if you do not mind starting very early in the morning; that is to say, if Doña Carolina will consent. There is a chance of brigands always, and you would have to rough it, but it might do to begin with. After a short time you will take to idling, whenever possible, as we do."

"That sounds delightful. By the way, no one seems to recognize their own English names. Why have you all taken up the habit of calling each other by Spanish ones?"

"No Spaniard can learn our names, and in provincial life the surname is never used. It has been impossible to avoid falling into their ways; you see we are a colony of seven people, and they are pretty numerous. I am Don Carlos, your cousin's husband is Henrique, and so on. You will become Elenita your name being Helen. But we don't keep to it always when no Spaniards are present, and I have no objection to your calling me Charlie, if you like, if I may be permitted to address you as Nelly."

Miss Carruthers looked the least bit offended at this speech. But her companion's eyes were so friendly as well as so mischievous, that it was difficult to be angry with him ; he noted her glance of displeasure, however.

"Excuse me for forgetting that to-day you are quite grown up. Eighteen, are you not ? But you will get to understand us in time, and see how a long exile from one's own country and people changes one's ideas and manners. Not in essentials, though, only in minor matters. Do you take in who the people are that are here to-day ?"

"Not in the least. Carolina introduced them all together in the prevailing fashion."

"Then let me tell you. That black-eyed man over by the wall is half English only ; he is Manuel by name, and has an English wife. He is a very good fellow, so is she, and it has turned out a very happy marriage ; she is known as Rosita. Then those two other men talking together are Carleton and Aylmer, and the next is old Hamilton—we always call him old Hamilton. You will find these three do still recognize their own names, so I will not give you the native equivalent. This girl just coming in under the archway is English too ; she lives over at Santa Elena with her father. We are all in love with her, because we none of us take to Spanish girls, and the situation is getting embarrassing, as you may imagine. It is most fortunate that you have arrived."

"What is her name ?"

"We call her Margarita. She is coming up to you ; let us go to meet her."

Nelly herself was fair and pretty to look on, but the girl coming towards her was, she thought, the most beautiful creature she had ever seen in her life. After a few words of greeting she was taken possession of by the others, and Irving, who had taken a fancy to Nelly, carried her off to where they had been sitting before. Nelly was very shy amongst so many strangers, and glad to have some one to take charge of her. Presently her host came up ; he was a young fellow of eight-and-twenty, and liked his wife's little cousin too.

"I am afraid it is very dull for you, Nelly," he remarked, by way of saying something kind. "Or is Irving making himself agreeable for once ? In England we should be 'doing' something,

I know, but you see how it is here. However, Carolina and I will only be too glad to further any views you may have."

"She is going up to the Sierra with us by way of a beginning," said Irving. "It is no use your objecting, and I mean to talk your wife over," as his friend made a gesture of astonishment. "Margarita Rivers will be sure to want to come too."

"And who do you suggest as a chaperon for your two young ladies, my dear fellow, may I ask? You know my wife would as soon think of starting for the moon, and I may not be able to act in that honorable capacity either."

"We will take some respectable Spanish woman."

"I hope you may get her." So saying he left the two together, and went to tell his wife of Irving's proposal. The idea was taken up warmly by those of the party who had still sufficient energy left to be enthusiastic over anything, and it was finally settled that the party should consist of Don Henrique, the host, Irving, Hamilton, Margarita Rivers and Nelly, with Rosita, the married sister of the former, as chaperon. Carleton and Aylmer declared they would be required to console Doña Carolina if anything happened to her husband, and they were to remain behind. These mountain expeditions—whose ostensible reason was business, as the more distant mines had to be visited in due course—might be prolonged from three days to ten, and that lady, it was well known, spent the time in imagining every possible disaster.

"I am afraid it is rather selfish of us to go off and leave her as we propose to do," said Nelly to Mr. Hamilton, a tall, fair man who had been watching her a good deal, unknown to herself. "Does she never join her husband when he goes away like that?"

"No; you see there are the babies, and the house where we shall sleep is not provided with many comforts. I think you ought to be told that some of us think it rather risky to take ladies to these lonely mountain hamlets, though. Still, there will be three of us Englishmen and two trustworthy Spanish servants, Tobalito, the ornamental, and José, the muleteer. When Henrique goes alone he never will take more than one servant, and that of course is unsafe; two men can be easily overpowered."

"Then there really is some risk?"

Hamilton did not answer for a minute or two; his thoughts had strayed over to the cemetery yonder, where his young wife lay. Seven years ago he had started one bright morning for this

very ride they were now discussing ; she had been strangely unwilling to let him go. Just as he was about to mount his horse he noted that her eyes had filled with tears, and he turned to her and kissed her again, bidding her be a good brave girl and not give way to foolish fears. About ten miles from the town a shot had been fired at him by a discharged miner who had a grudge against him, and his horse fell, throwing him also. Some muleteers who were not far off hurried into the town with the news that he had been murdered, and the poor little wife—an English Nelly like the one before him—had laid down on a bed of pain from which she never rose. When Irving called in the evening with a message from her husband to assure her he was unhurt, the Spanish nurse told him she was delirious and could not understand. He had insisted on being taken to the room, thinking that the sound of her own tongue might rouse her, but the sight that met his eyes there he never forgot ; a little dead child lay on her arm. She had killed it herself, the nurse said, knowing no better. The shock of the news she had heard that morning had been too much for the poor little Señora. When her husband returned he found her still and cold as marble too.

“ I beg your pardon,” he said, recovering himself with a start, unconscious that he had been staring hard at the girl, who reminded him strongly of his dead wife ; she was of the same type.

“ Risk, did you say ? Well, there are brigands in these parts, but they know better than to attack such a strong party as ours will be. Of course, if you were to stray far from the house alone, or do anything silly like that, you might get into trouble.”

The girl had often wondered why he looked at her so fixedly at times, and seemed so preoccupied ; she did not know his story then. Irving told it to her a few days later.

“ He and I have been great chums ever since,” he remarked. “ I used to think him a dull sort of fellow, and wondered what made his wife adore him so. She knew, but I didn’t. He is the best friend I have now. You might almost be her sister, you know, you are so like her.”

The proposed expedition to the Sierra was fixed for the following month, and Henrique urged his wife strongly to join it. He wanted to make the place into a summer station, as the heat of the plains at that season was unsuited to the health of English girls, and the only alternative was to send his wife and child to

one of the few sea-side resorts on the Spanish coast, all more or less uncomfortable, and fully two days' journey from L——, the town in which they lived.

"You women will begin to fade if you stop down here all the year," he had said to her, "and it makes these other fellows afraid to marry. Three young wives have died here within the last few years, and unless they take Spanish girls, which isn't desirable, they will remain bachelors. If you would set the example, we could soon make a little colony up in the mountains, and then we should have a pleasant little English coterie of our own. From May to October the weather is perfect at that altitude."

"But suppose some of those horrid men came and carried off baby."

"You would never be left without a strong escort. You know that I hate to part with you for so long, but it will be my duty to send you away to the north this year, if you won't do what I wish."

"Well, if the girls bring back a good report, and nothing dreadful happens while you are up there, I promise to go up in May and try it," and with this he was satisfied.

When the eventful day at length drew near, Nelly felt more excited at the prospect before her than she had ever done in her life. All sorts of preparations had to be made; the *manaadera*, the woman who came every morning to do the marketing, was desired to buy up everything fit to eat in the market, and as she interpreted the order literally, there was a famine in the town. The English colony sent up to say they were all coming to dine with Doña Carolina in consequence, but this was easily arranged, for all were the best of friends.

The procession started early next morning, riding most of the time in single file, for there were no roads. They looked rather like the members of a travelling circus, Irving remarked to Nelly, at whose side he was now usually to be found in his leisure hours, for they all rode mules covered with the usual trappings, and Tobalito and José both wore different costumes, the latter being a native of Valencia. Then he began to entertain her with gruesome stories of raids committed from time to time in that wild, lonely district.

"But whatever happens, there is a man apiece for you young ladies," he added in reassuring tones, as he thought he saw her face fall a little; "you need not be nervous."

"It will not be your fault if I am not. Which of you is to be my protector, pray?"

"Cannot you guess?" he answered, looking her full in the face.

She coloured hotly, which was exactly what he desired ; nothing pleased him so much as to know that a word or look from him would instantly have that effect upon her, should he choose to have it so. She was a great contrast to Margarita Rivers, whose beautiful dark eyes looked into other people's with calm dignity ; the latter was a strange, reticent girl, and though amiable and pleasant to all her admirers, could never be said to distinguish one above the other in the smallest degree, Nelly thought. She said as much to her companion.

"Ah!" he answered, "do you think so? For my own part I believe she has a preference. Time will show."

They dismounted for a brief spell of rest and lunch. Irving found a seat for Nelly under the shade of a great boulder on a carpet of hay fern, at which she exclaimed in delight. He was something of a botanist, and promised her many floral treasures later on ; meanwhile she was content with the bunch of wild lavender and yellow jasmine which he placed in her lap. The asphodels were growing thickly in the plain below, and large rose-coloured convolvulus blossoms twined themselves in a tangle about her feet. Irving went to Henrique and begged him to let his cousin stay a little longer, she was so interested in the flowers ; the others could ride on and they would overtake them quickly. Don Henrique smiled, and glanced with some suspicion at the young man, but he liked and trusted him. He gave the required permission, adding :

"She is under our charge, you know, old chap, and is still quite a child, thank heaven. You won't forget that, Charley."

Irving hesitated a moment.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, you know."

"Are you warning me that she is not to be fallen in love with? You should have done that before; you had no business to let a girl like that come out here if there is any reason why she can't be had."

"Are you in earnest?"

"Of course I am."

"Well, then, I may tell you that as far as I know she is free—that may be taken as a matter of course at her age—but her father would never consent to her coming to live out here. Is the mischief done?"

"As far as I am concerned, it is. You must be an absolute idiot, Henrique, if you think a girl as pretty as that could be let loose here without the inevitable consequences."

"Not at all. Margarita has been here three years. But, Charley, I admit that if I had the choosing of her husband you would do as well as any one I know. Be off, and don't keep her too long."

Don Henrique was young himself, and devotedly attached to his own wife, whom he had won and married in spite of much opposition.

Irving rushed away to his charge.

"Would you like to take a little turn with me?" he said. "You must be stiff after your ride."

"Yes, very much."

"Come along, then; we will overtake the others easily enough before they get to the top. I know a short cut, and José and Tobalito can lead our mules." This was not what Don Henrique had intended exactly.

She was looking awfully pretty just then, Irving thought—a picture of bright, healthy girlhood and maidenly purity and sweetness. His speeches brought the ready blush to her cheeks more than once. Presently they turned a corner and saw the others slowly climbing the mountain-side just above them. He waited till they were out of sight, and then, unable to resist a temptation which was growing stronger every moment, put his arm round her suddenly and tried to draw her to him. She did not know what love was yet, he thought; he would teach her before he put the question he meant to put later on. She resisted him for a moment with all her strength, then something in the touch of his arm seemed to overpower her; she yielded, and their lips met. He looked for a moment into her shy dark eyes; there was wonder and a strange new happiness in their depths. Just then steps were heard coming down towards them. It was José. The señor had sent him back with the mules, he said. They mounted in silence, and spoke no word till they reached the mountain-top and saw the platform before them on which the house was built. It was a lovely spot, they all agreed, as they met. Irving lifted Nelly from her mule, an unnecessary attention, but it gave him the opportunity of touching her again. Henrique observed the manoeuvre, and noted also that Nelly turned crimson once more.

Tobalito, who had ridden on, had made a great fire of walnut-wood in the huge hall, for at that altitude its warmth was agreeable in the house. They all sat round it and drank tea, declaring that the situation and surroundings of their quarters were perfect. After a rest on the camp beds upstairs the ladies came down and helped in the preparations for dinner. Nelly felt very happy, but avoided her lover as much as possible. He was in wild spirits. Hamilton and Margarita were quiet and grave as usual, but always interesting and agreeable members of a party, as Don Henrique used to say; Rosita was very much like her sister; they were singularly unselfish girls. One of them lies in the little cemetery now, not far from Hamilton's first wife.

After dinner they strolled out into the moonlight, but Nelly was too tired, she said, to stay, and she ran off upstairs in spite of a reproachful glance from Irving.

Her room was built out from the rest of the house, and there being nothing beneath it, she could see the moonlight on the grass below through an ill-fitting trap-door in the floor. She lingered long at the window thinking over the strange new experience that had come to her. Presently, when she thought every one had retired to rest, she heard voices apparently close to her. Two people were evidently just under the trap-door, not aware that the floor of her room was above their heads.

"I brought you here to tell you that, as you have been untrue to me, I wish you to consider yourself free," some one was saying in cold, measured tones. "It is unnecessary for me to explain how I became possessed of the information, but as I saw what I saw with my own eyes, there can be no doubt of the fact."

"I haven't the faintest idea what you mean," the reply came in tones as cold as his own. "However, as you wish to be free, rest assured that I shall raise no objection; your motive for wishing it is obvious." It was Margarita who was speaking.

"Pray mention it." This in Hamilton's deep, grave voice.

"Our little friend, Nelly; your attention to her has been obvious to all the world. No one can blame you; I like her immensely myself, and I should have respected you still had you given the right motive for the wish you have expressed."

"You must be mad to talk to me in that way. Can you deny that——"

But whatever he might have been going to say she never knew,

for she broke hastily away from him in the direction of the front of the house. Nelly felt cold all over at the confidence which had been forced upon her; she lay on her little white bed, thinking over the strange, eventful day which was just over till sleep nearly overcame her. Then she heard deep sobs at the other side of the planks which separated the next room from hers; it was probably poor Margarita, who had made a very great mistake. "Give him back to me; oh, God, give him back to me!" the girl was praying in half-stifled tones.

When Nelly woke next morning the sun was shining brightly through her window, and the sounds in the house seemed to indicate that it was time to get up. When she came down, she found them all assembled round the breakfast-table with one exception. Irving gave her a look over his coffee cup which embarrassed her not a little.

"Margarita is lazy this morning," said Henrique. "José, mind you keep the coffee hot."

"She was apparently fast asleep when I came down," remarked her sister. "I thought it a pity to disturb her."

"I will go off to the mines to-day," said their host, "and you two fellows can look after the girls. I shall be back to lunch."

Rosita proposed to Nelly that they should make some special dainties, which their men friends would be sure to appreciate; Margarita would be ashamed when she came down and found how industrious they had been. Irving asked to be allowed to help.

"You must go first," replied Rosita, "and have a smoke with Mr. Hamilton. By the time you have finished we shall have cleared away and then we shall be prepared to adopt your suggestion."

The two men went outside and strolled up and down in silence. Presently Irving said:

"I say, old fellow, there is something I should awfully like to tell you."

"What on earth is it?"

"Well, it is a delicate subject, but if you will promise not to be savage at my alluding to it——"

"Explain yourself, pray."

"Of course, we all believe you are engaged to——"

"Shut up, please."

"No, Hamilton; I must go on. There is a certain matter

which you ought to know. Carleton particularly begged me to tell you ; he didn't dare, he said."

"Damn Carleton ! I know perfectly well what you mean, and I decline to hear a word on the subject."

"Look here, Hamilton, you and I are old friends. Let me speak. You are under a delusion."

"There was no delusion in the little scene I saw the night before last ; that is doubtless what you mean. Well, perhaps I may as well tell you all about it. I think I should like you to know the truth. Two nights ago, when we dined at Henrique's, I went out into the garden to find her. She was just in front of me, and by the fountain Carleton was standing. I could not see their faces, as it was too dark, but I knew who the figures were. I was wishing he would take himself off, when I saw her go up to him, glance round to make sure all was right, touch his arm, and then allow him to take hold of her and kiss her in a fashion that made me long to knock him down, for, of course, you know who I am speaking of. I was close enough to them to hear a word or two she uttered, and that was quite enough for me. I suppose I moved, though the lemon-tree hid me from their sight, and she rushed quickly back into the house. We were engaged, but, of course, now I have set her free."

"Did you tell her why ?"

"Of course I did not go into those detestable details ; she knew well enough."

"What were the words you heard her say to him ?"

"Don't be a fool !"

"But, my dear fellow, the whole proof of the story I am going to tell you rests on those very words."

"Indeed ! The words were, 'Dick, my darling !' Now shut up, Irving ; I don't want to hear any of the fellow's excuses."

"If you do not listen, I will relate the whole story to Henrique and make him tell you."

"Go on, then ; but it is useless, you know."

"Now hear Carleton's account. He felt that touch on his arm, and was intensely astonished ; he would only have been too glad to win the girl himself—that we all know—therefore, it is not surprising that he yielded to the temptation to kiss her, as he owns he did. But, no sooner had he done so, than the words, 'Jack, my darling !'—I believe your name is Jack—met

his ear ; she had taken him for you. To this hour she believes it was you who kissed her ; it was pitch dark, you are both about the same height, and both have moustaches—an important item. Also, she probably expected you. Now, Carleton is most anxious you should know this, because, though he would, as I said, have liked to win her, he naturally no longer desires to do so. He is ready to give you his word of honour that this is the true account of the matter.”

Hamilton listened in silence ; then he turned to his friend :

“You are absolutely sure of your facts, Charley ? Remember what this means to me.”

“Of course I am. Now go and make your peace. She must think you have gone out of your mind.” As they turned towards the house the two girls met them with troubled looks. “We cannot find my sister anywhere,” said Rosita.

“Nonsense,” replied Hamilton. “Why, you said you left her in her room an hour ago.”

“I called through the door to ask if she was ready and thought I heard a very sleepy answer. But her little dog is in there alone and it may have been him I heard. I did not go in.”

They searched the house and surroundings ; an hour went by, then two. The men began to get really anxious. “If she has fallen into the hands of some of those brutes of peasants or the bands they are in league with, God only knows what may have happened to her !” Hamilton exclaimed to his friend, unable longer to refrain from speaking of the awful fear in his mind.

“She is a plucky girl,” said the other. “They would not dare to do her any real harm, you know. If they have got hold of her, they will know it is to their interest to keep her safe till they get their ransom.” But though he desired to comfort his friend he felt very uncomfortable himself. She had probably got up early and gone for a walk, they supposed ; there was no place for her to fall over and injure herself anywhere near, and it was most improbable that she would have wandered far unless she had been taken by force. No doubt she had had a sleepless night through her quarrel with her lover, for Hamilton had mentioned the fact that there had been something of the kind the night before.

They continued their fruitless search. Henrique did not return to lunch as he had intended to do, but this astonished no one, as business might easily have detained him, and Rosita,

foreseeing this, had given some provender to Tobalito, who accompanied him, for his use.

About four o'clock they heard a shout and the tramp of feet ; a burden was being carried. It was poor Margarita they were bringing home. Henrique, who had been communicated with, had at once returned, and passing on his way a disused well had turned aside to see if there might be any trace of the girl there ; it was a place where ferns grew in great abundance, and to his astonishment he had actually found her lying there. She was alive but evidently injured, and only moaned when spoken to. He went upstairs with the two girls, having considerable surgical knowledge, and reported when he came down again that she had sprained her ankle very severely. As far as he could judge from a very cursory examination, this might be the extent of the injury ; but from her semi-unconscious state, he feared her spine was hurt also. Hamilton was nearly distracted ; how she got where she was found there was nothing to show ; her dress was badly torn. The English doctor from L—— could not possibly arrive before the next evening, but it was arranged that one of the men and one of the two girls should take it in turn to watch through the night. Henrique and Rosita were to be in charge until midnight and then Nelly and Hamilton were to take their places. Henrique knew this would be a perfectly safe arrangement, and Irving felt he had no right to put in a claim under the circumstances.

No change had come over the patient when the second set of watchers took their place at the bedside. After they had sat there about half-an-hour, the girl's eyes slowly opened and she fixed them on Hamilton.

"Jack," she said in a low whisper, but he caught it, and Nelly instantly rose and went into the next room. He knelt down by the pillow.

"My darling, I know now that it was all a mistake," he said in broken tones. "Say you forgive me ; you are too ill to hear all about it now, but only get well and you shall see that I will make you amends."

She raised her hand feebly and laid it on his.

"Where are you hurt, my darling ; can you tell me ?" he went on. Her face was so white that there was a cold fear at his heart. "We know your ankle was sprained badly, but that is

all." The sound of his voice appeared to give her strength, and though the words came slowly, life seemed to be reviving within her as she answered him :

"I couldn't sleep, you know, after what you said to me, and I got up very early and went for a walk before any of you were awake ; I was so unhappy I scarcely knew what I was doing. I went down to the well and there I heard Spanish voices. I climbed up into the big tree which overhangs it so that they should not see me ; I heard them say they should come up to the house one night and see if anything was to be got, if they could poison the dog. Then I fell down from my perch and I expect I fainted. I think my head got a knock, I don't know. Dear Jack, I do love you, you know." He threw one arm over her and kissed her very gently, looking down at her with wet eyes.

"I didn't mean that about Nelly," she went on. "I ought not to have said it."

He saw that her memory was coming back, and that for the present, at least, his hopes might revive.

"Will you try and sleep now for my sake ?" he said. "I think that would do you a world of good."

"Yes," she answered, smiling a little, and then to his infinite satisfaction she turned with a sigh of deep content and slept without stirring till morning broke.

"She will do now," Henrique said as he looked in about six o'clock and found her lying in Nelly's arms and being fed with a teaspoon.

"A nice fright you have given us, young lady. Don't let it occur again."

When the doctor arrived he pronounced the patient to be on the way to recovery. There had been a slight shock to the system, necessitating rest for a few days ; and he also reported that Doña Carolina and the baby would arrive on the following day. This delighted her husband ; indeed that very summer his dream was realized, and now the whole of the English community of L—— go to find health and relaxation in that invigorating air as soon as the heat sets in.

When Irving heard that Margarita was out of danger he sent a peremptory note to Nelly requesting an interview. She still kept out of his way, however, and he did not get an opportunity of seeing her alone for several days. One evening he caught her off her guard and promptly revenged himself.

"I insist on your hearing what I have to say," he remarked in an injured tone as soon as the others were out of earshot. "I cannot write to your father till I have spoken to you, of course."

Nelly tried to look very much astonished.

"I did not know you knew him," she replied.

"Neither do I, as you are perfectly well aware. But I hope to make his acquaintance next autumn, when I intend to take a holiday. Nelly, dear, don't be nasty. I know you love me."

This sort of thing was outrageous in a man who had known her but two short months; when he ventured to throw his arm round her, however, and insisted on keeping it there, resistance seemed useless, and she whispered an answer which satisfied him. Her father gave his consent eventually; Hamilton and Margarita were married at the same time at the Legation in Madrid. Rosita was thrown from her horse in the autumn of the following year and lies among the flowers by the side of Hamilton's first wife.

SPAIN.

The Little City of Peel.

NEAR as the Isle of Man is to England, very few English people know much about it. It is true that every summer Douglas is visited by thousands of trippers. But Douglas is not the Isle of Man. It has become an ordinary third-class watering-place and a delight of the "week-end" tripper, and although nothing can destroy the natural beauty of its situation on the shores of a fine bay, it has become hopelessly vulgarised, and its individuality is gone for ever. The cheap tripper is no doubt often a most estimable individual in private life, his cheery good temper is above all praise, and the embarrassing heartiness with which he offers to share his pocket-warm eatables with any casual fellow traveller shows an admirable kindness of heart and expansiveness of character; but wherever the tripper in his thousands has descended upon any water-place, his

Effacing fingers

Have swept the lines where beauty lingers,

and taking from the place all that was quaint and characteristic have made it like himself—vulgar, noisy and somewhat rowdy. Douglas is a veritable trippers' Paradise for, in addition to a pier and a parade and all the ordinary amusements in which his soul

delights, it possesses several music halls which have beautiful gardens (where, all the year round, the fuchsia grows luxuriantly in the open air), and a fine headland to the south of the town on which a perpetual fair is carried on, and round which a beautiful marine drive is in course of construction. If he can tear himself away from the many and noisy delights of Douglas, the tripper may go round the island in a steamer and thus get a good general idea of the appearance of the coast, or he may drive in a carriage to the chief places of interest. The sea trip, given a fine day and a boat that is not overcrowded, is most enjoyable ; but not much real knowledge of the island can be obtained from it, while to the other method of touring there are two somewhat serious objections. In the first place, the drivers of public conveyances prefer—for reasons which are probably not entirely disinterested—to devote an unfair proportion of time to the Glens, which are places of considerable natural beauty which have been “improved” by the public entertainer. It may be very satisfactory to the proprietor of a Glen to be able to announce that the little bit of scenery which he has been good enough to take under his protection is visited by thousands daily, and that he provides for the amusement of those visitors who have paid sixpence at his turnstile for admission, lawn tennis, boats, swings, trout fishing (!), &c., free ; but such announcements indicate the Glens as places to be avoided by those who wish to know what the Isle of Man is really like. And, in the second place, a succession of brief flying visits to places of real interest leaves on the mind but a confused impression, which is apt to become distorted by the circumstances attending the visit. A comfortable or uncomfortable seat, pleasant or unpleasant travelling companions, a digestible or indigestible luncheon, have at least as much to do with the impression which places thus hastily visited leave on the mind as the characteristics of the places themselves, and the places are ever afterwards remembered in connection with these incidents in some such a way as the American lady was able to recall the fact that she had visited Rome : “ Rome—Rome—oh, yes, that was the place where we bought those very bad stockings.”

Of course every one knows that the Isle of Man has a Parliament of its own which is called the House of Keys, that it has a copper coinage of its own which has on the reverse a shield with-

the three legs on it which form the arms of the island, and that its cats have no tails. But the things which every one knows are seldom facts, and not one of these interesting pieces of general information is accurately true.

Cats without tails are certainly more common in the Isle of Man than elsewhere, but even in the Isle of Man it is only a minority of the cats that are tailless. Manx pence and halfpence may still be in circulation, but during a stay of nearly three weeks in the island, I did not see even a solitary specimen. The House of Keys is not the name of the Manx Parliament, but only of the Lower House, which in point of fact possesses very little power.

The Manx constitution is a very curious one, and the shadowy form of Home Rule which the island enjoys, while it is powerless for mischief, certainly has the effect of producing a great respect for the law among the people. The supreme ruler of the island, under the Crown, by whom he is nominated, is the Governor, who possesses something which very nearly approaches absolute power. It is true that there is a Parliament, or Tynwald as it is called, the Lower House of which, or House of Keys, is elected by popular suffrage (women having votes) for seven years; but as the Upper House, or Council, which consists entirely of office-holders nominated either directly or indirectly by the Crown, forms an irresponsible and irremovable Cabinet, and sits with closed doors, the House of Keys has very little power except for obstruction. Nor is its power of obstruction unlimited, for the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament is felt by the Tynwald to be a reality, and as all the important bills which are introduced into the Tynwald are for the most part based upon English Acts of Parliament, factious opposition would be an extremely dangerous game to play. The House of Keys has no power of initiation, but may only debate the bills which are referred to it by the Council; it cannot dissolve and is therefore unable to appeal to the people in the event of a conflict with the Upper House. The Isle of Man has indeed a faint shadow of representation in the Imperial Parliament. In the House of Commons it has no representative, but the Bishop of Sodor and Man has by courtesy a seat, but no vote, in the House of Lords. The Tynwald has the power of taxation, but a lump sum of £10,000 a year, which is supposed to represent the interest of the sum for which the island was purchased from the Derby family, is paid to the

Imperial Exchequer, and there is a Civil List of £11,000 a year over which the Tynwald has no control. The finances of the island appear to be admirably managed, for from a total population not larger than that of a fourth-rate English town, large funds have been raised for the construction of piers, harbours and other public works, and the main roads are very well kept. There is quite a respectable "National Debt," amounting to about a quarter of a million. There is no general poor law. In most of the parishes of the island the destitute poor are relieved out of a fund provided by private subscription supplemented in some of the parishes by local endowments. In some places, however, this admirable system has proved insufficient. The Tynwald Court has passed a permissive poor law, which has already been adopted by two of the towns and will probably soon become universal in its operation.

A little railway, ten miles long, connects Douglas with the Cathedral City of Peel. North of this line, with the exception of the aristocratic watering place of Ramsey on the east coast, the country is very thinly populated. A few miles from Peel there is a junction at St. John's, which is connected by a second railway, fifteen miles long, with Ramsey. Between these two lines is the mountainous region of the island. Ten of the mountains—most of which are in this region—are over 1,500 feet high, Snaefell the highest, being over 2,000 feet.

Castletown, the ancient capital, is on the east coast, about nine miles south of Douglas. It has about it an air of decayed respectability, and looks a dull and uninteresting place enough. In the centre of the town there is a little castle which appears to be in almost as good a state of repair as when it was first built and possesses a clock which was given by Queen Elizabeth, and is said still to keep "tolerable" time. Near to Castletown is King William's College, a well endowed and useful educational establishment. Further to the south, on the narrowest part of the island, are two picturesque little fishing towns—a mile and a half apart—Port St. Mary on the east, and Port Erin on the west. Between these two towns there is a bold headland, known by the name of Spanish Head. Here, according to tradition, some of the ships of the Spanish Armada were dashed to pieces. To the extreme south of the island is a yet smaller island—the Calf of Man. The Calf of Man is inhabited, and its proprietor is so en-

amoured of solitude that by advertisement in the newspapers he solemnly warns all and sundry against landing uninvited on his treeless and desolate domain.

It is curious to notice that in the little Isle of Man there is the same tendency of the population to concentrate itself in towns and to desert the country places which is noticeable in larger countries. Although the population of the whole island is increasing, this increase is due entirely to the growth of the towns. In all the country districts the population is diminishing.

In the remote and sparsely populated country districts to which the tourists and trippers rarely penetrate, except for brief flying visits, strange old beliefs, superstitions and customs still linger. Manx folk-lore—although it bears a general resemblance to the folk-lore of other Celtic nations—has its own peculiar characteristics. A very strong belief in witchcraft is still to be found in some parts. Unaccountable diseases appearing in cattle are attributed to the malign influence of a witch or wizard. For the purpose both of arresting the spread of the disease, and also of discovering the evil being who caused it, it is still believed that one of the infected animals must be burnt. In 1834 a living calf was thus offered as a burnt sacrifice in the parish of St. German. The ashes of the wretched victim were collected and applied to the rest of the herd—history does not record with what result. In 1843 there was a similar occurrence at Union Mills, and in 1853 at Maughold. There was an *oural losht* (or burnt offering) in the parish of Jurby in 1880, and it is believed that there have been several similar cases since. In one recent case a young horse—which it was supposed had been killed by witchcraft—was burnt in order that the witch might be induced to pass by, for when any bewitched animal is burnt it is believed that the first person who passes by will be the witch or wizard by whose spells it was afflicted.

However, it is not always necessary to proceed to such unpleasant extremities, for there are fairy doctors or charmers, who are able not only to counteract the spells of the witches, but also to use charms to bring luck to the fishermen, and for other beneficent purposes.

The Isle of Man is haunted by fairies, hobgoblins, phantom oxen of vast size, and phantom dogs. If the bravest of men sees one of these supernatural animals he is immediately smitten with unspeakable horror. Peel Castle was for a long time haunted by

a phantom dog, which appeared in the form of a large black spaniel with shaggy hair, and was known as the Moddy Doo. A drunken soldier ventured alone one night into the passage where he knew he would meet this exceedingly disagreeable creature. It was impossible to discover any of the details of the interview, for the foolhardy soldier was smitten dumb with terror, and died in strong convulsions three days after seeing the dog. The Moddy Doo, however, would seem to have been satisfied with the mischief which it had done, for it was never seen again.

Among a population consisting largely of fishermen, it is not surprising that there should be many old customs and superstitions connected with fish and fishing. A considerate Manxman will not turn a herring at table, as this would be tantamount to overturning the boat into which the fish was drawn from the sea. When one side of the herring is eaten the bone is removed, so that it may be possible to eat the other side without the necessity of turning it. The herring is king of the sea, having been elected long ago by the other fish to fill this high office. At this election all the fish were anxious to appear to the best advantage, and the vain and envious fluke spent so long a time in putting on his red spots, that he arrived too late. When he was informed of the result, he curled his mouth with scorn, and exclaimed, "A simple fish like a herring King of the Sea!" The truth of this story is attested by the fact that the mouth of the fluke has been on one side ever since.

There are several old proverbial sayings which indicate the importance of fishing to the prosperity of the island, such as, "No herring, no wedding," "It is better to be waiting on the top of the wave than on the church-yard stile." "Life to man, and death to fish," was a regular toast at public dinners. The Deemsters (or Judges) in their oath, swear to execute the laws of the island "as indifferently as the herring's backbone doth lie in the midst of the fish." Bishop Wilson inserted a special clause in the Litany in recognition of the importance of the harvest of the sea, "That it may please Thee to give and preserve to our use the kindly fruits of the earth, *and to restore and continue to us the blessings of the seas*, so as in due time we may enjoy them."

In curious contrast to the mediæval superstitions which are to be found in the island, it has a truly astonishing number of newspapers. Considering the smallness of the population it is

difficult to believe that they can all pay. Probably they do not, but they nevertheless continue somehow to exist. They are amusing reading to a casual visitor, but can scarcely be conducive to domestic tranquillity, as they are as full of petty scandal as a society journal. If the names freely mentioned in them are little known in the greater world, they are not on that account any the less important to their respective owners, for no man is small to himself. And what queer-looking names they are!—Kermodes and Cawtes, and Clucases, and Cubbinses, and Kaighens, and Kennaughs, and Kneales, and Quayles, and Kinrades, and Clagues, and Creers—and many other such like combinations of letters, beginning for the most part with K or C, or Q. Two of these papers—the *Manx Sun* and the *Isle of Man Times*—quarrel in a style which can only be fitly paralleled by that of the rival editors at Eatanswill. The following paragraph, which was published in the *Manx Sun* last year, is too good to be lost:

“It is well to be sure of one’s facts. A northern contemporary says the Lieutenant-Governor has missed a cheap advertisement for the island, in reference to the Manx wedding present to the Duke and Duchess of York. The paper adds, ‘So far as we have been able to discover, it has not received mention in a single English newspaper.’ The Manx wedding present *has been* mentioned in all the London morning and evening newspapers, in most of them *twice*, including the *London Times*. It has also appeared in all the leading provincial, Scotch and Irish papers. Is this not a ‘cheap advertisement’? If not, perhaps the fact might gain greater publicity through our northern contemporary.”

Any one who wishes to get behind the noise of Douglas and to know what the Isle of Man is really like could not do better than stay for a week or two in the little cathedral city of Peel. Being in the centre of the western coast and close to the two lines of railway it is a very convenient place from which to explore all parts of the island. Peel is just sophisticated enough to have two good hotels and a sufficient supply of comfortable lodging houses for the accommodation of its not very numerous visitors, and not sophisticated enough to be provided with a band, nigger minstrels, or any of those other side shows which are to be found in more fashionable watering places. It is proud of its claim to be a city, being smaller than many a Lancashire village, and unlike any other city in the world. Its narrow

streets twist and curl themselves about in the strangest and most incomprehensible fashion. Under the older houses are huge cavernous cellars, which in ancient days were used for the storage of smuggled goods. There is a tiny market-place, on one side of which stands a disused church, which it is impossible to call anything but ugly, but its ugliness is of an order which is neither obtrusive nor entirely unpicturesque. Above the city stands a good modern church which is said to be the finest church in the island. In itself it is a favourable specimen of a well-designed modern sea-side church, but is quite out of harmony with its surroundings.

The Manx people do not seem to be enamoured of church restoration. They let their old churches fall into ruins, and build new churches to supply their places. None of these old churches could ever have been beautiful, but as ruins they are not without a certain charm.

The new church at Peel was erected to supply the place not only of the old deserted church, but also of the older ruined cathedral. On a little island off the south end of the sea front, and connected with the mainland by a causeway, stand the picturesque ruins of an old castle, within which are the ruins of the ancient Cathedral of St. German's. That the castle is haunted goes without saying, for the Isle of Man is so rich in folk-lore that every place is haunted, while for the possession of some localities several banshees, goblins and ghosts are rival claimants. Apart from its supernatural reputation there is much that is interesting about the castle. Of the cathedral it may be safely asserted that, with the possible exception of St. David's, it is the most romantically situated of the cathedrals belonging to the Church of England. According to legend, St. David placed his cathedral in the wild and remote spot which it occupies lest he should be distracted by the gaiety of Caerleon-upon-Usk, the ancient seat of the diocese, which is now known as St. David's. There is a strange fascination about that beautiful building and its surroundings, which it is impossible to describe, but which no one who has visited St. David's will ever forget. But the position of St. German's Cathedral is in some respects more remarkable than that of St. David's. Its eastern end pierces the castle wall and stands upon a rock so close to the water's edge that in winter or stormy weather the waves dash against it and rise higher than the top of its walls. In the days of its ancient glory,

the roaring of the wintry wind and the noise of the waves dashing against roof and walls must often have supplied a strange wild accompaniment to the voices of the choir uplifted in psalm and anthem. Up to nearly the middle of the present century, both these romantically placed cathedrals were deserted ruins. The cathedral of St. David's has been beautifully restored. The cathedral of St. German's remains a deserted ruin still, and strangely enough, although divine service is sometimes held within the ruins of the castle, the place selected for this purpose is not the cathedral, but the tilting ground.

Under the cathedral is a damp and dismal dungeon where many an unhappy captive endured a living death. Here, according to tradition, the unfortunate Eleanor Cobham, wife of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester and uncle to Henry VI., was imprisoned for many weary years, until death released her from her miserable captivity. For one hour only every day was she permitted to leave her cell for exercise in a small inclosed yard. Once, indeed—after seven years of imprisonment—she regained her liberty for a few short hours. One of the soldiers who guarded her, either moved by pity or more probably won by bribes from his duty, woke her early one morning and led her out by a secret passage to a cave southward of Holme Town. From this cave she escaped to a hermit's cell, but was quickly discovered and brought back again, never again to leave her prison till released by death. For many years afterwards, at the stroke of twelve, her unquiet spirit was believed "to go up and down the stone staircase of one of those little houses on the walls." And here, by a turn of Fortune's wheel, Captain Edward Christian, who had been Lieutenant-Governor of the island, was imprisoned in 1628 for "sum words spoken concerning ye Kinge." Here, too, for six years, from 1656 to 1662, several Quakers were confined for their non-conformity. When their imprisonment was over, they were banished from the island. During the stern rule of Bishop Wilson, the prison was used as a means of enforcing ecclesiastical discipline. It is a comfort to know that this damp and dismal hole will never again be used for any such purpose.

The inhabitants of Peel are honest, industrious, and it is to be hoped, successful fishermen. They are a fine and handsome race, somewhat shy, but always courteous and well-mannered. It is said that the Manx people are inclined to be quarrelsome

and litigious amongst themselves—a not unusual defect among the inhabitants of an isolated community, to whom small things must often appear large, but towards strangers their high-bred courtesy and kindness are as pleasing as they are remarkable. They are always ready to give information about their laws and customs, and if they appear a little disposed to boast of their law-abiding character, there would seem to be solid grounds for the credit which they take to themselves. That there are beggars and drunkards amongst the Manx people is highly probable, but during a stay of a fortnight at Peel, I never saw either drunkard or beggar. On remarking this fact to one of the fishermen, he told me that drunkenness and begging were against the law. The possibility that the law might be disobeyed never seemed to occur to him.

The Manx are a patriotic people, and their patriotism is shown not only in their complacent satisfaction in speaking of all things appertaining to their little island, but also in what they are ready to do for it. In its numerous endowed institutions the little city of Peel bears striking testimony to the love which its citizens have borne to it.

And the same affection which has led them to found institutions for the benefit of their birthplace induces them to observe their island customs, even when far from home. One of these customs is not only commendable in itself, but also has a strikingly pretty effect. Wherever a Manx fisherman may be, he always brings his boat into harbour on Saturday night, in order that he may spend Sunday on shore. It is a pretty sight to see the brown-sailed fishing boats coming into Peel Harbour by twos and threes on Saturday night, and leaving in a body on Monday morning. All through Sunday the small inner harbour is packed with boats; Sunday is a day of rest and quiet.

Those who do not need to take their pleasures noisily will find that they can obtain plenty of quiet amusements at Peel. The bathing is excellent. The beach is sandy and safe, and there are sheltered nooks close at hand which render the use of tents or bathing machines unnecessary. Those who take delight in sea-fishing may hire boats and tackle for a very moderate sum, and it is said that considerable numbers of fish are sometimes caught with the line. On a calm summer evening, to row out a little distance from the pier, and wait in an anchored boat for fish which will not bite, listening meanwhile to the gentle swish of the

water and the shouts and laughter of the fisher-lads, and watching the changing, waning light on sea and land, is enjoyment enough to the indolent, contemplative man. Indeed, such unsuccessful fishing has advantages over more successful sport, although it is probable that the keen sportsman would not sufficiently appreciate them. For the amateur fisherman enjoys it, and the fish must enjoy it also, for, although, they contrive to elude the hook they seldom fail to annex the bait, and should the fisherman catch nothing else, the keen sea air will at least give him an appetite, and if he is constrained to satisfy his cravings by buying fish instead of catching it, it is all the better for those who make their living from the harvest of the sea. The unsuccessful fisherman has therefore the satisfaction of feeling that he has spent a pleasant time upon the sea, has provided a light repast to hungry fish and has put money into the pockets of those, who, if they have been more successful than himself, have certainly done more to deserve success. Here, then, is the ideal spot, which brings pleasure without pain to all concerned in it. The philosophical fisherman enjoys it, the fish enjoy it, it brings profit to the owner of the boat and also to those to whom fishing is the serious business of their lives and not a mere pastime to while away an idle hour.

A day at Peel is not absolutely eventless. The coming and going of steamers punctuate the long lazy summer hours so that the holiday maker need not find that he has exchanged the weariness of dulness for the weariness of labour, like that unfortunate city clerk, who, after many years of constant work—in the days when bank holidays were unknown—was induced by his thoughtful employers to take a fortnight's holiday, and came back to the office on the second day, begging to be excused the rest of his holiday, for, having spent one whole day riding a donkey on Hampstead Heath, he had found the unaccustomed recreation infinitely more irksome and distasteful than his accustomed work at the desk. There is a steamer which plies daily between Belfast and Peel—arriving at Peel at the setting of the sun, and leaving again for Belfast in the morning. To the visitor both the departure and arrival of the boat are matters of somewhat languid interest. To the inhabitant—especially if he be a lodging-house keeper—the arrival of the steamer is most interesting and may be highly important, for every passenger who

lands at the Peel pier is a possible lodger, although it is darkly hinted that certain persons who are in the pay of the Douglas lodging-house keepers waylay the passengers and pour into their ears terrible tales of the impossibility of obtaining accommodation at Peel. A little after mid-day, the boat which daily makes the circuit of the island, passes by Peel and opposite to the castle rocks comes nearer to the land than at any other point in its course, so near, indeed, that the hoarse voice of the merry tripper on the boat shouting the mysterious cry, "Hi, Kelly," with which he salutes the scrambler over the rocks, may be distinctly heard. What these strange words mean I have not the slightest idea, but every genuine tripper who respects the traditions of the island appears to derive some strange delight in shouting them on all possible occasions. It is an innocent and simple pleasure, if somewhat incomprehensible to the philosophic mind.

There are many pleasant walks in the neighbourhood of Peel, and a hill to be climbed. This hill stands a little to the south of the town and is known by the name of the Horse Shoe Hill. From its summit, the whole of the western coast, from the Calf of Man in the south, to the point of Ayre in the north, may be seen, while inland there is a fine view of the mountains and valleys in the southern part of the island. The Isle of Man has been the scene of many desperate battles, and every foot of the country which is visible from the Horse Shoe Hill is full of historical interest. The island was probably invaded by the Romans, and certainly by Danes, Norwegians, Welsh and Irish. It was held now by one and now by another of these different nations. The legendary Norwegian King Orry was the founder of a dynasty and the builder of the castle of Castletown. The part which the island played in the Revolutionary wars is well-known to every reader of "Peveril of the Peak." It was a place of refuge for political refugees, of banishment for political exiles, of imprisonment for political captives. The echoes of the fierce battles which were fought on its fertile soil were often lost in the seas which wash its shores. They were for the most part of only local importance, but the struggles of the peoples who strove for mastery in it are so rich in romantic events and more romantic legends, that when the history of the island comes to be written by competent hands it will excel in interest that of many far larger countries.

A Mystery of the Sea.

CHAPTER I.

SOME forty years ago Eastbourne was little more than a fishing hamlet.

At the time I speak of the railroad had not invaded this quiet nook. The road leading to what is now such a fashionable sea-side resort led over the marshes from Pevensey, where the train set down passengers bound for Eastbourne.

Eastbourne was by no means up to date at that time, and differed in most things from fashionable Hastings.

No dainty damsels were to be met by the sea-shore in the newest mode of marine attire, nor did you meet matrons not slim, but comely, coquettishly dressed, as though still bent on conquest and a little mild flirtation to while away the time until papa came down by the husband's train on Saturday.

All such folly was looked down on, if not despised, by the demure young ladies and stout austere matrons who resorted to Eastbourne to brace up their already strong constitutions.

Hats were seldom, if ever, seen on grown-up female heads. Matron and maid alike wore large bonnets, with blue silk uglies projecting over their faces like an awning at the back of a bathing machine.

The first party I met on my way to Eastbourne comprised a matron with a following of well grown up daughters, some six in all, mounted on donkeys. They all wore uglies, and their petticoats being rather full and short, a good bit of leg was visible, clad in white cotton hose, their large fat feet encased in stout leather slippers, tied on with broad black sandals.

It was about as odd a cavalcade as I ever met, and the hallooing and shouting of the donkey-drivers, as they pulled the animals' tails and belaboured their backs to make them go, was certainly primitive if not savage looking.

We were told at the hotel Eastbourne was quite full, but a bill in one of the windows of the three houses facing west at the end of the Grand Parade gave us some hope of lodgment.

The sea wall did not extend beyond this short parade; the rest of the road, as far as the Wish Tower, lay over a wide expanse of sea shingle, by no means pleasant to walk over.

Beyond the Wish Tower was the open downs, where immense flocks of sheep browsed in uninterrupted solitude.

A beaten path lay along the cliff, fenced off from the downs for the most part by a rude stone hedge to keep the sheep from falling over the steep cliffs.

There was no carriage way along the cliff in those days ; if you wanted to reach Beachy Head by the cliff you had to walk.

We elected to take this walk on the first day of our arrival, and on our return journey chanced on an old shepherd leaning on his crook by the low stone hedge.

We stopped to speak with him, and found by his replies that he was quite a century behind the age.

He had tended the sheep on his native downs, man and boy, for more than sixty years. Had been married some forty years an' more, and had brought up a family of nine on ten shillings a week.

Did he ever have any holidays ? Yes, twice a year, Christmas Day and sheep fair day, after the sheep-shearing.

And what about Sundays ? did he ever go to church ? Well, as to Sundays, he minded his sheep same as other days ; hadn't been to church but once since he was married. " My going to church that there once happened this way," he said, leaning over the stone fence and becoming all at once communicative.

" My old woman, she says to me, ' The squire he be going to give away some prime beef at Christmas, and he's doing it through the parson, so it's them as goes to church will get the biggest share."

" Well, the Sunday afore Christmas, I puts on my best smock-frock and clean clothes, and after sending my oldest boy to look after the sheep, made my way to church.

" I felt rather strange like when I came to the church porch, as I hadn't been to church of a Sunday afore within memory.

" However, I says to myself, ' you do as other folks does and you can't go far wrong.' Well, I stood at the door and watched them a bit ; then I took courage, made for the nearest empty seat, sat down and clapped my hat afore my eyes, looked into it a few minutes as I'd seen the others do ; but when I was going to rest that hat on my knees to get out my pocket-handkerchief, there was Sol looking up at me with the queerest look I ever seed in a dog's eyes afore.

" ' Softly, Sol,' says I, ' you get under the seat,' and I took hold on 'im to push 'im under, but he didn't see it, and after a little

tussle he jumps up alongside me and looked about him just like a Christian ; he only wanted a hat to say his prayers in to behave like the best on 'em.

"In less than a minute up comes Tom Crab, the beadle, very red in the face. 'How dare ye bring yer dog in here! Don't 'ee know as how animals arn't allowed into church? Come, now, out with you ; here's the squire and the parson coming up to the west door ; they'll be here in another minute. Get out, I say!'

"So I gets up all in a fluster and hastened out at the south door, Sol following close at my heels.

"We han't a-been to church since, sir, Sol nor I ; 'tis no place for the likes of we.

"Why do I call that dog Sol, sir? Well, his name is Solomon by rights, and a wise un he is too ; knows the ways of sheep better than I do, though he arn't ten year old till Martinmas.

"They is poor, silly things is sheep, sir ; I'd never get them into the fold at lambing time if it wasn't for Sol. When the lambs gets mixed up the old ewes go bleating hilter skilter, often after a dozen on 'em, knocking 'em over like ninepins ; that's Sol's time : he knows every mother's son on 'em, and brings 'em up to their dams in less than no time."

When we bade him good evening he touched his forelock and looked wistfully at his empty pipe.

My friend understood this mute appeal instantly. He happened to have a pouch full of prime cavendish in his pocket ; to transfer it to the hands of the old shepherd did not take a moment.

We looked back when we had gone about twenty paces. The broad grin of satisfaction on the old man's weather-beaten visage did one good to see.

The evening was closing in when I reached my lodgings at the east end of the Grand Parade ; I had taken care to secure them in the earlier part of the day.

It might have been the parting from my my friends, at the Pevensey station, that cast a gloom over my spirits ; anyhow, it was in no very cheerful frame of mind that I entered the dingy apartments of my sea-side lodgings.

I had been hypped and out of sorts for some little time. Hastings had not proved bracing enough, besides I wanted repose and perfect quiet. The bouyant spirits, cheerful talk and joyous laughter of my young friends had jarred on my over-

wrought nerves until I could endure it no longer; therefore I decided to beat a retreat and retire to Eastbourne all by myself.

It was a rash step, that I more than half repented of already as I sat alone in the gloaming, listening to the monotonous grate, grate of the shingle as it was borne back by each receding wave. No other sound broke the stillness; not a creature was to be seen: what a relief the sound of a cheerful voice, breaking in on this unnatural silence, would have proved to me.

I was completely tired out by my long day's unwonted exertions, and must have fallen asleep by the open window: although it did not appear to me that I had closed my eyes, before a bony hand was laid heavily on my shoulder, and starting up I found myself face to face with the most unpleasant-looking female it had ever been my lot to behold.

She was apparently about fifty years of age, thin and wiry to a degree, with a complexion the hue of dried parchment.

Her features were sharp, her pale blue eyes bright as gleaming steel and just as hard and cold.

"It's ten o'clock, miss," she said in a harsh voice. "I've brought in your chamber candle; we turn off the gas always afore eleven."

I felt relieved when she retired and closed the door behind her. If I had seen this woman when I looked over the apartments, nothing would have induced me to reside for one night under her roof.

As it was, I had taken them for a month, and money was of some consideration to me just then.

Anyhow, I must stay there that night; perhaps the woman might be kind enough at heart spite of her unprepossessing appearance.

Fearing she might reappear before turning off the gas, I took my chamber candle and proceeded up stairs to my bed-room, on the first floor, at the back of the house.

The bed-room was of fair size, but the great old-fashioned four-poster almost blocked up the centre, and it was draped in some sort of dark woollen material, that looked almost black in the dim light, giving the lumbering machine the appearance of a huge hearse.

Such beds are seldom seen, even in lodging houses, at the present day, and from every other house they have long since been banished to the limbo of forgotten things.

Before I extinguished my bed-room candle, I took the precaution to look under the bed, to make sure that no one lay concealed beneath it.

I found, however, that the framework of this ark-like structure reached within some two feet of the floor, so that no full-grown person could possibly creep under the bed.

Reassured by this, I locked my bed-room door, put out my light and crept into bed with fear and trembling. That old four-poster was rather awe-inspiring in the darkness.

Spite of this, however, I soon fell asleep, and slept on for some hours undisturbed even by a dream, when I awoke suddenly, in a terrible fright, to find the bed rocking under me like a cradle.

With a fearful cry I sprang out of bed and sank into a capacious arm-chair near the window.

Then I held my breath to listen. A low hollow sound, like the beat on a muffled drum, fell distinctly on my ear, making my flesh creep with horror.

It was pitchy dark, and to my dismay it flashed across my mind that I had forgotten to provide myself with matches.

I groped my way to the bell-pull, and tugged at it with all my might; then I waited, hoping every moment to hear footsteps approaching.

I waited in vain. The house remained perfectly quiet. It was useless to ring again. The landlady had told me, when she gave me my chamber candlestick, that no bells were answered after the gas was put out.

When I realized that no help could be expected from that ogre-like woman, I began to try to regain my lost courage, and face the worst.

No living thing, I reasoned, could possibly have been concealed in the room when I locked the door and retired to bed. What, then, was there to fear? I had never done harm to any creature alive or dead. Why should I be troubled with phantoms, even if the room were haunted?

In broad daylight I would have scorned to own to a belief in the supernatural, and have laughed to scorn the idea of my attributing some unaccountable sounds in the dead of night to ghostly visitants.

Even now I tried to reason myself into the belief that I had awakened out of sleep in a sort of nightmare. The muffled sounds I heard could not be quite reasoned away, still I should be just as safe from evil influence in bed, as sitting out, the night through, in that old arm-chair in the cold; still it was not with-

out reluctance that I crept once more into bed. Alas ! All my boasted scepticism melted away in that lonesome chamber ; a strange awe came over my spirit, as ever and anon the bed swayed gently to and fro and the curtains rustled as though drawn aside by ghostly fingers.

I clasped my hands together and prayed far more earnestly than I had ever done in hours of real peril, when imminent death appeared to stare me in the face.

A horrible dread took possession of my mind, when I remembered the hard, cruel expression limned on the features of my landlady : she looked a woman equal to any deed of fell intent.

Perhaps some one had been done ruthlessly to death in that fearsome bed, and their wild expiring cry for mercy had rung through that dreary room in the stilly midnight hour : a cry that might still be going up to heaven for vengeance !

Did some unquiet spirit haunt this unblessed spot, like the ghost in "Hamlet," waiting to reveal a terrible crime till questioned ?

In a voice rendered husky with terror I adjured the phantom in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost to speak, or depart and leave me in peace.

To my dying day I shall never forget the awful thrill that chilled my heart's blood when three distinct raps broke the solemn stillness of that fearsome night.

I sat up in bed and vainly tried to pursue my questioning. I could not utter a sound. My tongue clave to the roof of my mouth. I was all but paralyzed with terror.

Then the rapping became quicker and louder, as though my ghostly visitant were impatient of delay.

Hist ! what was that ? Muffled footfalls, surely ! Yes, and coming nearer ! yet nearer !—close up to my pillow ! The curtains rustled—I could endure no more ; with a stifled cry I fell back insensible.

I must have lain some hours in a sort of trance, overcome by the awesomeness of the situation in which I found myself.

Out of this trance, however, I was at length rudely awakened by feeling myself lifted bodily up in bed, and nearly flung out on the floor.

So violent was this additional shock to my already overwrought nerves that, had not the early daylight penetrated the gloom, I should have gone crazy from sheer fright.

Quite dazed, and trembling in every limb, I opened my eyes and peered through the half-drawn curtains.

All in a moment some dark object crouching near the door arrested my attention.

I sat up and leant over the side of the bed. As I looked the dark, shapeless-looking thing moved, and reared itself upright. It was certainly nothing human.

At sight of it all my self-control gave way; I fell back in a violent fit of hysterics, laughing and crying in a breath like one demented.

People who know me call me a strong woman. I suppose I must be, as I soon pulled myself together, and took a good look at the cause of my recent night's terror.

A pair of beseeching brown eyes looked timidly at me, as though deprecating my anger.

Poor dumb creature! My relief at finding the cause of my past night's terrors a living substantial object disarmed all idea of retribution. I instantly unlocked and opened the door to give this unwelcome intruder exit, and very soon I heard my *oufe*, of the dark hours, going slowly down the stairs with that muffled tread that had so terrified me in the dark watches of the night.

CHAPTER II.

THE sunlight flooded the room when some one knocked at my door to say it was past nine o'clock and breakfast was waiting.

I rose at once, and was not long in making my toilet; but before I left my room I made a careful examination of that uncanny-looking four-poster.

There was not any palliassé on this ancient bedstead, but a sacking instead, laced to the framework with strong cord. On this sacking a feather bed had been laid—not a bad arrangement with regard to comfort, save that the sacking could be easily made to sway to and fro, giving one the sensation of being tossed in a blanket.

The space underneath the bed appeared a sort of repository for lumber and dust. An old worn leather portmanteau, with "H. R." painted on it in white letters, particularly attracted my attention, as behind this my four-footed gnome must have lain perdu under the bed until I fell asleep, and on getting up to stretch himself had caused the oscillation which, together with the dull, drumming sound, had so terrified me.

It was easy enough to laugh at my recent terrors now that the cause was made manifest. Nevertheless, I would not pass through such another night's experience for a king's ransom.

As I sat at breakfast I espied the disturber of my repose stretched full length on the doorstep basking in the morning sunshine.

The landlady coming into the room at that moment, I inquired to whom the dog belonged, and mentioned the fright he had given me during the past night.

"So the brute has been up to his tricks again, has he?" she snapped, eyeing the poor animal viciously. "It was only last week that he frightened a lady into a fit of the jaundice, and lost me a good ten-pound note at the very least. I'd give any one a shilling to poison or drown that dog willingly."

"But how did it get under my bed?" I asked with pardonable curiosity.

"Dear knows, that's more than I can tell! I looked under your bed the last thing at night, and shut the door, knowing his tricks; but keep that dog out of that room at night is more than I can do, though how he gets in there is a mystery to me, unless he creeps down the chimney."

"But there must be some reason for this," I remarked, looking straight at her.

"Well, yes, there is, and it happened this way. Rather more than a month ago a gentleman came here to lodge, and brought that dog with him. I don't take in dogs as a rule, but the gentleman was civil spoken and paid handsomely, so I stretched a point to oblige him; though I didn't know till afterwards that the brute slept under the bed every night.

"I must say the gentleman didn't give much trouble. He was out all day after breakfast, and, provided there was a good bone for the dog, he didn't mind what he had for dinner himself. He wasn't here a full week, however, when he went out one morning as usual, followed by his dog, and I've never laid eyes on the gentleman since. That's four weeks ago yesterday. He left nothing behind him but an old portmanteau, which, seeing he didn't come back for, I pushed under the bed. The sailors hereabouts think he's drowned, because he used to take a boat and go out by himself a long way from the shore to bathe, and the last time he went out it was a bit rough; but it's my opinion he only

did that to throw dust in the boatmen's eyes, and took his opportunity at last to get away in some outward-bound ship. Well, all I wish is that he had taken his horrid dog along with him!"

A sad foreboding fear made my voice tremble as I at length inquired the name of the missing man.

"Well, miss, strange as it may seem, I cannot remember. He told me his name, of course, but I'm bad at remembering names. I only wish I did know, 'cause I'd soon advertise it in the papers, to say if he didn't come to fetch away his belongings they'd be sold to pay expenses. That might cause some of his friends to make inquiries. I daresay he's got some one belonging to him, though I've always thought it strange that no letters were ever delivered to this house for him."

I had listened to the woman's tale with a sort of dreamy fascination. Could it be that fate, or chance, had brought me to that dreary sea-side lodging, to hear that my fondest hopes had vanished like a dream?

It was not quite a year ago since first we met; yet Harry Kerswell was the king among men to me; the only man I ever loved, or could love.

I was only a governess in his father's family, yet he was manly and courageous enough to ask his parents' consent to our union.

Sir William had always been kind and courteous to me since I entered his family, and although he naturally looked for his only son to marry some high-born maiden, he would have given a reluctant consent, had not Lady Kerswell and his eldest daughter vehemently opposed, what they were pleased to term, such a *mésalliance*.

It is only women who treat with scorn every female worker in the great human hive, no matter however refined and highly educated that worker may be.

I had done my duty honourably in that state of life in which it had pleased God to call me, yet nothing could exceed the envy, hatred and all uncharitableness displayed towards me by the ladies of Sir William Kerswell's family. They scorned me as though unworthy to touch the hem of their greatness, and tried their best to humble me in the dust.

After that, I had a decided aversion to enter the family, but Harry would not give me up.

"I will wait a year," said he, "to allow my parents time to think it over. If at the end of that time they refuse to give their

consent, I mean to marry without it, and we will go out together to the far west, where we shall be free from old-world conventionalism, and enjoy a free, unfettered existence."

To this I gave a rather unwilling assent; I did not see why we should banish ourselves from civilized society because his family did not choose to consider the wife he had chosen their social equal.

Not that I would not have gone with him gladly to the remotest part of the habitable globe, but I foresaw that once the newness of such an existence in the far west wore off, he would pine for his old way of life, and become discontented, if not absolutely miserable.

At length I ventured to write and tell him how distasteful the idea of self-banishment had become to me, more on his account than my own; therefore we had better give up all thoughts of making our future home in the far west.

That was two months ago, and I had not heard from Harry since; hence my distaste to the society of my gay, cheerful young relatives, and the desire to be alone, which had brought me to Eastbourne.

I sat almost spell-bound for some time after my landlady had left the room; a dread foreboding that the missing lodger was Harry Kerswell had taken possession of my mind.

At length, with a strong effort, I put away my haunting fears. "My nerves are unstrung," I said impatiently, "and every shadow appears to take the form of evil portent."

The better to shake off this unwonted depression of spirits, I decided on taking a long walk over the downs, and after dinner to return to Hastings: another night in that dreary lodging would prove beyond endurance. The bare idea of it sent a shudder through my frame.

When I started for my walk, the great curly black dog still lay stretched out in the sun before the door.

Newfoundland dogs are all pretty much alike. At Clumber Park they kept a dog very like this one. It was Harry's dog, and the master and his canine friend were seldom seen apart. Alas! I felt certain it was his dog when the animal began to follow me along the Parade. Arrived at the end, the dog turned down towards the sea, and after a moment's hesitation I followed his track.

It was nearly high tide, so it did not take long to reach the water's edge, where I sat down with the dog crouched close beside me.

"Poor old Yeo, come again to look for yer master, eh?" said an old weather-beaten sailor, as he patted the dog's head.

"Yeo!" my heart sank within me, as I heard that old familiar sound. "Yeo, Yeo!" I repeated in painful excitement.

The dog sprang up, placed his forepaws on my shoulders, and began to lick my face.

Overcome, I burst into tears.

"Belike as you knowed the young gentleman, miss?" said the old sailor. "I've been expecting all along as some one would be here to make inquiries after him."

"What was the gentleman's name?" I asked, as soon as I recovered sufficient composure to question him.

"Well, miss, I believe it wor Kerswell; leastways, he told me so."

"And you say the gentleman went out to sea in a boat, all by himself? Please tell me all you know about this sad affair," I cried eagerly.

The old sailor sat down on the side of a boat and looked seaward for the space of what, in my impatience, I thought the best part of an hour, apparently to collect his thoughts; then he cleared his throat with a long and rather loud resounding *ahem!* before commencing a prolix relation of all he knew concerning this tragic event.

"I pushed the boat out from the beach for him that morning as usual," he said, at length. "It was rather rough in-shore, and the wind came in sudden squalls from the south-west; not that there was any danger to one who could handle a boat, and the gentleman could do that, like one to the manner born; still I did venture to ask him if he hadn't better take a hand in the boat with him, to look after it whilst he dived over for his deep-sea bath. But he never would take a creature with him, no, not even his dog; so he only laughed in his pleasant way, and said, 'Oh, I shall be all right, Larry. If the boat drifts away, I'll swim ashore.'"

"I watched him as he pulled out to sea, with a slow, powerful stroke, that sent the boat through the water like an arrow from a bow, until the little craft appeared like a mere speck on the ocean. Then I went about my work and forgot all about it, till dinner time, when seeing he hadn't returned, I got rather anxious.

"When a couple of hours more went by, without any sight of the missing boat returning towards shore, me and my mates went out in a sailing craft to look for it. But although we cruised along the coast till midnight, we saw no sign either of man or boat; and to this day the fate of that poor young gentleman remains a Mystery of the Sea."

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FEBRUARY, 1896.

A Modern Comedy of Errors.

By DARLEY DALE,

Author of "THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH," "THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT," etc.

CHAPTER V.

BLOWING UP FOR A GALE.

THERE are times when the veil which separates the living from the dead seems thick and impenetrable as a stone wall ; there are other times when it is thin as air, and the spirits of the departed seem to be closer to us than the living can ever get. We see them as we knew them in life ; we hear their voices ; we feel their presence, not with our outward eyes and ears and flesh, but with those spiritual faculties which correspond to the bodily organs of sense.

Probably our nerves are overstrained and sharpened at such times ; such, at least, is the explanation that science and common sense would give of such phenomena ; but science knows very little about departed spirits, and common sense is often confounded with the commonplace, and the fact remains, the departed approach the living nearer at some times than at others.

Now, the day that Dr. Peter Dursley travelled to Eastwich, to hold a consultation with Paul as to the state of Sir John Dane, was the day of the second anniversary of his wife's death ; and as he leant back in a first-class carriage, of which he was the only visible occupant, it seemed to him that his dead wife was present with him.

As the train whirled on through a plain of ploughed fields and

green meadows, separated by bare hedges and dotted with leafless trees, under a canopy of low-hanging grey clouds, occasionally lightened by the coy gleams of a November sun, he seemed to be conversing far more intimately with her than he had ever done in her lifetime. He talked to her, or he thought he did, of Nona and her sweet loving ways ; of the boys and their future careers ; of his offered baronetage, and how little Paul must go to Eton when old enough ; of his increasing practice and growing fame ; of his interest in politics and of the next speech he intended to make ; and all the way down to Eastwich her presence went with him.

Paul met him at the station with Paris and Fly ; but, pleased as Peter was to see his twin brother, to whom he was devotedly attached, yet, it struck Paul, he was *distrain* and evidently very much altered by his wife's death ; sobered, saddened, softened, yet matured in thought and mind. Even when listening to the history of Sir John Dane's case, the great doctor seemed to be lost in thought, and only uttered an occasional remark.

"I suppose he has a great many anxious cases on his mind. I can't expect him to take the same interest in Sir John that I do. Perhaps when he sees Chloe he will wake up a little. Poor old Peter, he is not like the same man he was in poor Mary's lifetime, he still wears a hat-band, I see, though she must have been dead two years. I shan't mention Chloe to him till he has seen her," thought Paul, as he drove his brother to Bilney.

It was quite dark by the time they arrived, but Sir John's room was brilliantly lighted. Dr. Peter Dursley declined tea, and went straight to the patient, wishing to have as long a time as he could with Dorothy and Paul before he returned to town by the night mail.

His opinion, on the whole, was favourable ; Sir John's heart was undoubtedly weak, but he could detect no actual disease of that organ ; his liver was affected, but he made no change in Paul's treatment of that. The symptom he laid most stress upon was the insomnia from which Sir John had for weeks been suffering. If this could be cured, he thought there was no reason why Sir John should not recover and live for years.

He wrote two prescriptions, one of which was a tonic and the other some opium pills to be given at night ; and then he suggested they should order the dog-cart and start for Lyneham.

“What about these prescriptions, Paul? I should like Sir John to have the pills this evening.”

“Oh! we’ll take them with us, and I daresay one of Sir John’s grooms can ride over for the medicine; if not, I can send Fly back with it.”

“We can send. Dursley, just ring for Chloe; she is dying to know what your brother thinks of me!” said Sir John.

“And I am curious to know what Peter will think of her,” thought Paul, as Chloe rushed into the room, knelt by the bedside, and hiding her face on her father’s breast, said in a very shaky voice:

“Tell me the whole truth, dad; what does he say?” The great doctor looked with interest at the slight, girlish figure kneeling by her father’s couch. There was such pathos in her attitude as she waited for the verdict of life or death; it was evident her whole happiness was wrapped up in the answer.

Peter pitied her from the bottom of his heart, and hastened to reassure her.

“I am very hopeful about Sir John. I can detect no actual disease, and I hope, if he can only get sleep, he will soon recover.”

Chloe jumped up, kissed her father passionately, and then ran to Dr. Peter Dursley, holding out two little brown hands, and lifting up two black eyes filled with tears.

“Oh! I do like you; thank you a hundred times for coming and saying that,” she said.

“Just give Dr. Dursley that cheque I made out for him, it is in an envelope in my desk, when you have done shaking his hands,” said Sir John.

Chloe withdrew her hands, and instead of immediately obeying her father, looked from Peter to Paul and from Paul to Peter, as they stood together on the hearthrug.

“Well, you are exactly alike, exactly; the same height, same figure, same features; if it weren’t for your beard and moustache, Mr. Dursley, I don’t believe any one would know which was which,” said Chloe, standing with down-stretched arms and clasped hands, and nodding her curly head after her own peculiar fashion.

“I know one person who would never mistake Paul for me; my little girl,” said Dr. Dursley.

"Oh! you have a little girl, have you? Then there is a difference between you," said Chloe.

"And three motherless little boys," said Peter.

"Oh! I am sorry," said Chloe very gravely, and then she handed him the cheque.

"There is another difference; you don't get such big fees, and I call it a shame, for you have done ever so much more for dad than he has," she whispered to Paul, as Peter said good-bye to her father.

"I would do anything for him for your sake," said Paul, with a look there was no mistaking.

"Hush!" said Chloe, shaking a finger at him, but the glance she gave him was rather encouraging than otherwise.

"What do you think of her?" said Paul, as he drove his brother home to dinner.

Dr. Dursley started, stammered, woke up from the dream which he had been dreaming all day, wondered whom Paul meant, and said so.

"Think of whom?" he asked.

"Why, of Chloe, of course. We have seen no one else."

"True, true," said Peter, who had seen his dead wife more distinctly than Chloe all day. "I think she is a dear little girl, as loving as my Nona bids fair to be."

"Nona! Nona is a baby, Chloe is a woman, an angel, a witch, a fairy," said Paul indignantly.

"That's the way the wind is blowing, is it? Dear old boy, I wish you every success, with all my heart," said Peter.

"Yes, it is worse than life or death with me, it is Heaven or hell, as Chloe decrees, worse luck to me. When I am with her, I feel it is more likely to be Heaven, directly I leave her, the betting is on the other place."

"What does Dorothy say?"

"Oh! Dorothy is charmed with her and, of course, if I ever win her, Dorothy will go to you."

"I wish she would, for many reasons, but I know there is no chance of that as long as you are single. I must wait till Miss Chlce is Mrs. Dursley."

So the brothers settled their sister's life for her, entirely to their own satisfaction; she was to devote herself to Paul till he married, and then go to Peter and be a second mother to his

children ; and Dorothy, had she heard them, would have thought it quite right, and never have imagined it possible that any other fate might be in store for her. There are still a few women left in the world, who believe their *raison d'être* is to be help-meets to men ; they are not up to date these women ; are they any worse for that ? Not if they are as bright and happy, as gentle and sympathetic, as clever in domestic duties, as careful of the comforts of others as Dorothy Dursley. Even Peter forgot his sorrow in her society, and the evening passed only too quickly for all three of them, and Dorothy grudged even the time she had to spend in dispensing Sir John's medicine, which she did as quickly as possible after the brothers arrived.

Fly, whose dignity was hurt because he was not sent to Bilney with the great Dr. Dursley's medicines, helped her ; that is to say, he fetched the drugs she needed.

"Now the digitalis, Fly, and then you may cork and label the medicine, whilst I make up the pills. Give me the opium first. Now, let me see ; opium—two scruples. Is that right ? Yes, it is scruples. How beautifully Peter writes ; I should never make a mistake with his prescriptions. Two scruples, that is it. What big pills these will be. I am only to make two ; one each night. I'll write the labels, Fly, and you can pack them up and seal them, and give them to Sir John's groom. Where is he ?"

"In the stable. I wish he was in his grave."

"What do you mean, Fly ?"

"It is a thundering shame, I call it. To have carried Dr. Dursley's medicine would have been the making of me ; and master goes and lets an ignorant chap as could no more hand you the right bottles than he could talk Latin, be the bearer of it. Why, I'll never have such a chance again as long as I live ; and that Brooks won't even know what a lift master's given him. I'll take precious good care I don't tell him either, that I will, ma'am."

"Why, Fly, you silly child, what difference can it make to you ?" laughed Dorothy.

"I'd have given all my Christmas boxes to have taken it. There is one comfort, the doctor h'aint got his title yet, so Brooks can never say he carried Sir Peter Dursley's medicine."

"How do you know he will ever have a title?"

"He is to have one, the Queen have offered him one; I heard him tell master so. Didn't you know, ma'am?"

But Dorothy did not stop to answer, she rushed into the drawing-room to ask if Fly's gossip were true, while he whistled for the groom, and handing him the medicine, said:

"Here you are, *we* have made up the medicine, the pills are inside; mind you don't break my bottle. I don't half like trusting you with it, I can tell you."

"Mind what you are about, young man, or I'll get down and tickle you with my riding-whip before I start. One would think you was the London doctor himself, to hear you," said the groom.

"Would you? Well, I have sat behind him, and that's being nearer to him than you are ever likely to get; so good-night, and take care of *our* medicine," said Fly, deeming it prudent to shut the surgery door, as soon as he had finished his remark.

But he continued to regret the chance he had missed, for the rest of the evening. He had one consolation: Dorothy, in her haste, had left the prescriptions on the surgery counter, instead of filing them, to copy into a big ledger at her convenience; so Fly picked them up, filed them, and wondered what his master would do without him.

The news of Peter's baronetcy put Dorothy into very high spirits. She and Paul called him Sir Peter, and drank his health; and then Peter and she teased Paul about Chloe, and altogether Peter thoroughly enjoyed his evening, and had not laughed so much since his wife's death.

"Is the practice increasing much, Paul? I suppose you don't want a partner?" said Peter, after dinner, as Paul enjoyed the pipe they had been telling him Chloe would not allow him to smoke in her presence.

"It would increase if I laid myself out for it, but I am not so fond of work as you are. Why, do you know of any one who would care to join me?"

"Yes, a friend of mine, about a year or two our senior, would like to buy a country practice or go into partnership with a country doctor. He hates London, he is a bachelor, and an excellent fellow when you know him as well as I do. Average abilities, but a good manner with patients of the higher classes;

it is worth thinking of ; if you win the fair, or rather the dark, Chloe, you must increase your practice, raise your fees, give up dispensing your own medicines, and drop the parish work. I see great capabilities of improving this practice immensely, and Crofton is quite the man to help you in that."

"It is not a bad idea ; I'll think it over, and let you know what I decide," said Paul.

"Keep him up to that, Dorothy," said Peter, when Paul had gone to order the dog-cart.

"I will do my best ; he wants stirring up ; I wish you could come oftener ; but I have no doubt the very fact of your having been down here will do Paul good."

"He is behind the times ; he is carrying on the practice on my father's old lines, quite, and yet he is as well up to date in professional knowledge as I am, only he has not the same opportunities. Dear old Paul ! I hope he wins that girl."

"I'll come to you, if he does, if you like."

"I should love to have you, for my own sake as well as the children's. Here, by the way, Dorothy, where does Paul bank ? I'll pay Dane's cheque in to his account, he deserves it as much as I, and wants it more. Now I must say good-bye. I can't tell you what a pleasure it has been to see you both again," said Peter, as he wrapped himself up for the journey.

Fly was not allowed the privilege of sitting with his back to the great doctor again, as Paul only went with his brother, wanting to discourse on Chloe all the way ; moreover, the wind had risen, it was blowing hard, and there was every prospect of a stormy night when they started ; and before Paul got back, the wind had increased to a gale, accompanied by heavy storms of rain.

The night was pitch-dark, but it lightened from time to time ; the wind howled as though laden with the sighs of the lost ; it blew so furiously that Paul could with difficulty keep the reins in his hands, and once or twice he thought horse, dog-cart, and he, himself, would have been blown over. From time to time the driving rain beat on his face, and stung the frightened horse—fortunately the quietest Paul had—like whips ; and it was so dark, between the flashes of lightning, that Paul trusted to the horse and to his own memory of the road to guide him, rather than to his eyes. They had had the wind in their backs going to

the station, but Paul had it in his teeth on the return journey. However, there is something exhilarating in a storm, even when you are weathering it; and, in a way, Paul enjoyed it, the spice of danger contributing thereto. Nevertheless, never was he so glad to see his own yard-lamp as he was that night, and never so resolved not to brave the elements again, till day-light at any rate.

The vision of Chloe, which had flashed upon him like the lightning from time to time throughout the drive, now vanished before the thought of a pipe and some hot coffee, and a chat with Dorothy over the fire before going to bed; when this last vision was also dispelled by the sleepy groom, as he took the horse.

"There's a message from Bilney Hall, sir. Shall you want me?"

No wonder if Paul said a naughty little word at this news. Bilney was the last place he expected a message from that night. He had no patients there except Sir John, and Sir John was the only patient, so he said, at least, for whom he would break the resolution he had just made about not going out again till day-light.

Directing the groom to wait further orders, he went into the house, where Dorothy met him with a three-cornered note in her hand.

"It is from Chloe, Paul. Sir John is much worse, but it is an awful night and you must be dead beat; must you go?"

Paul, meanwhile, was reading the only note he had ever had from Chloe, written in a bold, masculine hand, of which that young woman was secretly very proud:

"DEAR MR. DURSLEY,—

"Please come at *once*. I believe he is dying, so does nurse, and I am sure it is the new medicine; he was all right till he took the pill.

"CHLOE."

Paul looked at his watch, it was now half-past eleven; Sir John had probably taken the pill at ten. Half-an-hour, at least, must elapse before he could get to Bilney; it would be midnight by the time he arrived. Of course it could not be the medicine.

Chloe was evidently frightened ; but so was the nurse, a sensible, strong-minded woman not likely to take alarm easily ; of course he must go. He would have gone anywhere, at any time, if Chloe had sent for him ; so, swallowing the coffee Dorothy had prepared for him, while Paris was saddled and bridled, he started off again with the Bilney groom, from whom he learnt that his master had been taken worse suddenly, and that the nurse had told Miss Chloe to send for him.

Paul told Dorothy before he left that he should stop the rest of the night at Bilney, so she was to shut up the house and go to bed : but he was destined to have all his plans frustrated that night, and long before the first streaks of daylight lightened the sky, a horse and rider entered the stable-yard, and though the horse was not Paris, the rider was Paul.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GREAT STORM.

THE weather had been bad enough when Paul was returning from the station after seeing Peter off, but it was worse as he and the groom rode to Bilney. There was lightning now, but it was so dark that on one road with wide ditches on each side they were obliged to dismount and lead their horses. It had only been rain in the early part of the night, but it was hail now, and the hailstones, which Brooks declared were as big as marbles, fell like sharp blows on their heads, which were covered only with cloth caps, and on their gloved hands, and on the poor horses.

Paris, fortunately, was partially protected, as Paul had ordered her horse clothing to be kept on, and she seemed to understand her master's frequent assurances, that only due necessity should have forced him to bring her out in such a night.

"Ma pauvre Paris ! C'est le père de Chloe qui m'appelle. Vas donc, ma fille ! Ma bonne Paris. Tu comprends bien, n'est-ce-pas ?"

And no doubt Paris did understand that she had a human rival in her master's affections, and with commendable unselfishness did her best to further Paul's wishes, and in spite of having been a long round before, that day, kept ahead of the groom most of the way.

The first sight that greeted Mr. Dursley on entering the house was the three eldest daughters of Sir John Dane, sitting round a large wood fire in the hall, in their dinner dresses; and this he knew was a bad omen, for they would certainly have gone to bed, unless they had reason to think their father was very bad. They were improving the shining hours by crocheting the dullest and ugliest coloured wools into garments for Christmas presents for the poor of their parish.

"I am so sorry you have had to brave such inclement weather, Mr. Dursley, but I fear my father has had a relapse," said Augusta.

"We must look on the bright side; it may be only a passing attack," said the ever-cheerful Constance.

"Don't let us detain Mr. Dursley. Will you come up at once, please?" said Bertha, who was evidently more alarmed than her sisters.

Paul, who had been divesting himself of his cap and ulster while these remarks were being made, now sprang up the stairs three or four at a time and, with a hasty warning tap at the door, entered Sir John's room.

There, on the bed, lay Sir John sound asleep, breathing stertorously, motionless, otherwise, as a log: curled up by his side, bending anxiously over him, her handkerchief twisted into a ball with which from time to time she wiped her great black eyes, lay Chloe, sobbing in a way to break Paul's heart.

"Dad, darling, do wake."

Paul walked quickly to the bedside, opened Sir John's eyes and looked at the pupils, felt his pulse, and, shaking his head, said, "I am too late. He is sinking."

A stifled cry from Chloe, as she hid her face on her father's pillow, and then an outburst of half-restrained sobbing cries of "Oh! oh! oh!" was the only answer.

"How long has he been asleep?" said Paul, in an undertone, to the nurse, drawing her away from the bed-side.

"He took the pill at ten, and in ten minutes was sound asleep; at half-past I noticed his breathing. I applied strong mustard plasters, did my utmost to rouse him, Miss Chloe helping me, and sent for you. It is the opium, isn't it?" answered the nurse, who was young and rather pretty.

Opium poisoning; where is the prescription?"

"It was not sent, but there is another pill in the box. Is it possible there has been a mistake in making them up."

"God forbid," said Paul, under his breath, as he thought of her who had made up the pills. The nurse handed him the pill-box, and at the same moment Chloe, who was watching every movement of her father, called her to the bed-side.

Paul opened the pill-box, saw an enormous pill inside it, and knew at a glance Dorothy had made a mistake and given his patient an overdose of opium.

"My God! she has poisoned him," he muttered to himself.

"Mr. Dursley," called the nurse.

Paul put down the pill-box, and went to the bed, where he saw Sir John was dying.

"You had better summon the others, nurse, it will soon be over," he said in a whisper. Chloe overheard him, and looking up at him with streaming eyes and clasped hands, cried:

"Oh! save him, Mr. Dursley, save him. Can't you wake him? Can't you? Can't you?"

Paul leant over the dying man and laid his hand on his heart, a position which brought his face very close to Chloe's, who was sitting upon the pillow on the opposite side of the bed.

"Chloe! I would die to save him if I could, for your sweet sake; but no power on earth can wake him," he whispered gently.

Chloe shrank back on the pillows with a bitter cry, and then kneeling upon the bed by the side of the dying man, bent down and kissed his forehead again and again.

At this juncture the three Miss Danes filed silently into the room, all looking very large, very sallow, very sandy, very solemn; Augusta headed the procession, and Paul, who could do nothing, moved round to Chloe's side of the bed, leaving the three elder sisters to stand in a row on the right hand side of Sir John, who was breathing his last.

Bertha, who was the most moved, fell on her knees and prayed silently during the rest of the scene; Augusta stood decorously wiping away a tear, from time to time; while Constance, who for once in her life refrained from offering any encouraging remarks, looked so preternaturally grave that Paul could have laughed heartily at the sight, at any other time.

Chloe alone broke the silence with her sobs, and prayers to her father to wake and speak to her once more.

"Only once more, dad, dear. Just speak one more word to your little Chloe ; I'll be content then," begged Chloe, interspersing her sentences with kisses, but Sir John never moved, and each breath grew fainter. "He does not hear me! Oh! dad! dad! dad! I wonder would he hear my violin, do you think?" said Chloe, suddenly, in a low voice to Paul, glancing for one moment from her father to him.

"Chloe! How very incongruous it would be," said Augusta, under her breath ; but Chloe paid no attention to her sister's remark ; if Paul had given her any hope that Sir John could hear the violin, she would have played to him, incongruous though to Augusta's ears, death and music might be.

Paul, however, could only shake his head mournfully, but the tears which dimmed his blue eyes answered Chloe sufficiently, and as she turned back to her father, Sir John gave one little sigh, and without opening his eyes or giving any sign of consciousness he passed away.

Constance and Augusta knelt down, and Chloe felt Paul's hand on her shoulder as he whispered :

"He is dead."

Chloe shivered, shrank back terrified, and, clinging to Paul, let him lift her half-fainting from the bed, from whence he carried her to a sofa in the adjoining drawing-room ; there she lay sobbing and shaking, while Paul chafed her hands and temples, loosened her clothes, ordered one of the servants to bring a hot bottle for her feet, and tended her more gently than any woman could have done.

"Oh! dad. I have no one to love me now, no one to live for. Let me die, God, let me die," sobbed Chloe, when she began to recover consciousness.

"Don't say so, Chloe, I love you with all my soul, live for me," whispered Paul, and the great black eyes opened, and as they met his blue ones, something in them besides the tears encouraged him to bend lower till his lips touched hers, and he was not repulsed. His hand was still locked in Chloe's, by whose side he was kneeling, when Augusta's voice interrupted them.

"Had not Chloe better retire, Mr. Dursley? the night is very far advanced."

"Yes, but she must not be left alone. Let Miss Bertha sleep with her, please, and some one must help her to bed ; she is too ill to undress herself ; and she must have something to eat. I don't think she has taken anything since dinner. I will go into the next room and send nurse to her, if you will wait with her," said Paul, pressing Chloe's hand.

He went back to Sir John's room, told the nurse to see to Chloe, and to come back to him when the poor child was in bed ; and then he sat down by the fire to await her return ; and though the dead man lay close to him he forgot his presence and fell into a delicious reverie. He thought of nothing at first but Chloe, of the kiss that had not been repulsed ; of the look in those great eyes ; of the great grief which had shaken the very soul of her ; of the depth of her love for her father, from which he argued the possible strength of her love for him, if he could win it, and he seemed well on the way thereto.

The child had evidently very strong affections, she was capable of loving intensely ; hitherto, love for her father had been the all-absorbing passion of her soul ; now that he was dead would she suffer a still more engrossing love to take possession of her heart ? Just now grief had hold of her, but surely love must conquer grief before long, and resume its sway under different conditions. Light and shade, brilliancy and gloom were Chloe's very essence. She was a creature made up of contrasts.

"Yes," thought Paul, "and I strongly suspect there will be a dark side to her love for me, if I ever win it ; it won't be all plain sailing if Chloe and I agree to row in the same boat. Begad ! I had forgotten the cause of Sir John's death."

And, rousing himself from his dreams of love and Chloe, he took up a candle and went to look at the body on the bed ; not that he had a doubt as to the cause of death, from the moment he had entered the room. As he looked on the dead man's face, the whole weight of the calamity which had occurred seemed suddenly to fall on him, and crush him beneath it. He moved away, threw himself into the chair he had risen from, covered his face with his hands, bent forward with his elbows on his knees, and passed the worst quarter of an hour he had ever known.

Love had blinded him for a little while to the full force of the blow which had fallen on him, but as he gazed on Sir John, his

eyes had been opened, and he now realized what an appalling thing had happened.

Sir John had been poisoned. Worse than that.

Chloe's father had been poisoned. Worse still than that.

Chloe's father had been poisoned by his sister Dorothy. Worse again.

He was really responsible, not Dorothy; therefore, Chloe's father had been poisoned by him.

And he had been mad enough to think that Chloe would love him, would marry him; common decency would forbid such a thing. How could any girl marry a man who was practically her father's murderer; or, at any rate, the culpable cause of his death?

And Chloe, who had worshipped her father, when she came to know the truth, and know it she must, soon, she would hate the very sight of him. Of course she would. He did not see how she could do otherwise.

And then Paul Dursley descended into hell for a brief space. It is a journey most of us have to take once in the course of this life, and no one has yet reported favourably on the experience. The place of eternal punishment may be deep down in the centre of this earth, as theologians have thought; but we have not to go further than deep down into our own souls to find the place of torment Paul Dursley was visiting. He was suffering intensely, as the knotted veins on his forehead and hands, and the burning tears that fell between his fingers bore witness; but as he sprang to his feet when he heard the nurse coming back, he felt the worst was over.

Come what might, and nothing short of ruin, professional, social, domestic ruin, could come, still, the worst was over. The mental agony was past. He had faced everything, at least he thought he had; but he was mistaken in this, as he soon found. He had decided what to do, and made up his mind to do it, cost what it might, and it would cost Chloe; nothing less, and how much more he did not stop to inquire.

A man who has lost a fortune does not count the pence that went with it.

He looked five years older than when he had entered the room that evening, as he rose to speak to the nurse; his face was ashen grey, his brows were knit, and the lines on his face seemed to have been graven with a burin since he arrived.

Worry is one of Nature's burins, care is another, both had been busy on Paul Dursley's face that night.

"There must be an inquest," said Paul to the nurse, in a low voice.

"An inquest?" she exclaimed.

"Yes, the death is not from natural causes, I can't certify that it was. There must be a post-mortem and an inquest; the post-mortem is a mere matter of form, for you know as well as I that opium poisoning is the cause of death; but the law will require it."

"Where was the medicine made up?"

"In my surgery. By me; if not actually by me, as far as all practicable purposes go, I, only, am responsible. I, only, am guilty."

"But it will ruin you, Mr. Dursley. I thought Chloe told me your sister dispensed all the medicines for you?"

"So she does, as a rule, but, as I said before, this mistake is mine, not Miss Dursley's; she never made a mistake in her life. I, only, am to blame; I, only, shall take the consequences."

"But it is such a terrible thing for you; can't it be hushed up? It was a pure accident, we know; must you have an inquest, and bring it all before the public?"

"Yes, in self-defence I must do that; if I attempt to hush it up I may be indicted for murder instead of manslaughter."

"It is dreadful; it really is a terrible calamity."

"It is. Well, I must go home now, and, as soon as it is daylight, I'll arrange for the post-mortem to be made before twelve to-day, and the inquest the next day; that could be held in the village, and the jury must come here to view the body. You had better lie down, hadn't you? You can do no good here."

"No, I promised Chloe to watch, she would not go to sleep until I did. You will find some refreshment in the dining-room; none of the servants dare go to bed."

"Thank-you, good-bye," said Paul, who was anxious to get home.

He ordered one of Sir John's horses, for Paris was not fit to do any more work that night, and rode home through the nearly-spent storm. He had been too much occupied with the tragedy indoors to pay any attention to the howling wind outside, which had added to the terrors of the night to those who had leisure to think of it. Now the violence of the outward elements was

welcome to Paul ; the high wind cooled his feverish brow, the difficulties of the journey home deadened his feelings, and forced him to think where he was going, rather than of what he was suffering.

But the predominant thought in his mind, and it grew stronger as he neared home, was, how could Dorothy make such a blunder ; what on earth had possessed her ; was it Peter's visit that had distracted her and made her careless ?

Sir John had taken opium enough to kill a dozen men ; he dreaded to know how much she must have used. How could she have done it ?

It was such a terrible mistake ; it was worse than fatal, it was criminal.

True, but it was he who was to blame, not Dorothy. He never ought to have allowed her to dispense for him ; she was unqualified legally, though he had believed her to be as well qualified as he was himself, really. No jury could acquit him of culpable negligence in allowing an unqualified person to dispense his medicines ; but no jury, if he could prevent it, should ever know that Dorothy dispensed his.

He would take the whole blame, Dorothy's name should not appear at all ; he and he only was responsible, he to all intents and purposes had made the mistake. But how could Dorothy have done it ? He came back to this as he rode into the yard, and in answer to the night-bell, Dorothy called out : " Paul, darling, is it you ? "

CHAPTER VII.

DOROTHY'S DEFENCE.

" PAUL, darling, is it you ? "

This was Paul's greeting from his sister on his return from Sir John Dane's death-bed, and his answer was not remarkable for politeness : " Who the devil should it be ? " he growled.

In excuse it may be remarked that there are few things more exasperating to an angry man, than to be addressed in terms of affection, when his anger is at boiling-point, by the unconscious object of it.

Utterly unconscious of having incurred her brother's displeasure, well aware that he was not an irritable man, nor one likely to be provoked by bad weather to bad language, Dorothy

feared something serious had happened, and as she let Paul in she asked :

"What is the matter? Is Sir John worse?"

"He is dead."

"Dead! Oh, Paul! I am so sorry."

"So am I," said Paul grimly, as he took off his macintosh and followed Dorothy to the dining-room, where the fire had been kept in.

"What did he die of? It seems so sudden."

"Opium poisoning," said Paul, in the same grim tone, as he filled his pipe.

"Poisoned! Poisoned! What do you mean, Paul? Has there been an accident?"

"There's been the deuce of a blunder, Dorothy, a blunder that means ruin for me, and I am afraid, my poor girl, you made it," said Paul, more in sorrow than in anger.

"I? I made a blunder? What do you mean, dear?" exclaimed Dorothy, opening her blue eyes with terror and surprise.

"You made up Sir John's pills, didn't you?"

"Yes, from Peter's prescription."

"Well, it was the pill that killed Sir John."

"Oh, Paul! Don't, for pity's sake, don't say the pills I made up killed him."

"The pills! Why, God save us both, child, there was enough opium in one pill to kill ten men. How many grains did you put in?"

"Grains! Why, there was a scruple in each pill; the prescription said two scruples to be made up into two pills."

"Twenty grains of opium! Soul of De Quincey, what possessed you, Dorothy? It was two grains, not two scruples."

"No, Paul, no! I am perfectly, perfectly positive the prescription said scruples, and not grains. I looked at it two or three times, because I thought it was a large dose."

"A large dose, indeed! Surely, Dorothy, you must have known three grains of opium is a large dose."

"No, I did not; besides, Peter prescribed scruples, I am certain, so I never dreamt of questioning it."

"My poor Dorothy! You have made a mistake indeed! Peter, of course, is quite incapable of such a blunder. You mistook grains for scruples."

"I did not, that I am positive of, but I'll go and get the prescription," said Miss Dursley, whose long, fair hair hung in two braids down her back. She wore a pale blue dressing-gown, and looked younger than she did when dressed and with her hair done up.

"Poor child! As if Peter could make such a mistake," muttered Paul, as he threw himself into his easy-chair and began to puff his pipe. He heard Dorothy go to the surgery, then there was a pause, and then back she came with the prescription in her hand, and a look of intense delight on her face; delight in which there was no triumph, only relief. A terrible burden had fallen off her shoulders on the journey from the surgery to the dining-room. It was not her mistake.

"Paul, look! It *is* scruples. Thank God, I have not poisoned the poor man; but poor Peter," she cried.

"Let me see! By Heaven, you are right, it *is* scruples. It is impossible, and yet it is so! What on earth was Peter thinking of? Two scruples of opium to be given in two doses," exclaimed Paul, springing up and stamping about the room, pipe in one hand, prescription in the other.

"You are sure it was the opium that killed him, Paul?" asked Dorothy, who was as unable to believe the great doctor had made such a blunder, as Paul was.

"Sure! Why, it was enough to kill ten men in Sir John's condition. Two grains are a full dose, and Peter, knowing Sir John had a weak heart, would never have given him a full dose; he intended to give him one grain, not twenty grains: I can't understand it. The more I think of it the more incomprehensible it seems," and Paul put down his pipe, threw himself into his chair, thrust his hands into his pockets, and stretching his legs straight out, looked at his toes for further light on the matter.

"He seemed very absent when he arrived, I remember; and I thought how Mary's death had changed him," said Paul.

"By the way, it was the anniversary of her death; she had been dead two years, yesterday. Perhaps he was thinking of her," said Miss Dursley, who was standing staring at the prescription, with her foot on the fender.

"I wish he had been thinking of grains, instead of scruples. It is incredible. I can hardly believe my own eyes, and I am sure

Peter would not believe his, if we were to show him his prescription ; but that he must never see, so burn it, Dorothy."

"Indeed, I shan't ! What do you mean, Paul ?" said Dorothy, folding the prescription up, and holding it fast in one hand.

"I mean, Peter must never know it was his mistake. It would ruin him. He is nearly at the top of the tree ; if such a blunder as this were made public, he would fall, never to rise again. He could never survive such a scandal."

"But will it be possible to hush it up ?"

"As far as Peter is concerned, yes ; as far as I am concerned, no. I am going to take the blame. I meant to do that in any case ; if it had been your mistake I should have done so."

"Oh, would you ? No power on earth should have made me hold my tongue, if I had done it. Besides it means ruin for you as much as it does for Peter," exclaimed Miss Dorothy.

"Not so much as it does for Peter, because there is less to ruin ; I have no great reputation to lose, he has. I shall lose what I value more, it is true. I shall lose Chloe, but I must sacrifice her and myself to poor old Peter. It would kill him if, just as he is throwing himself heart and soul into his professional career, such a calamity as this were to fall upon him ; it would be his death-blow."

"But, Paul, what will the consequences be to you besides, as you say, losing Chloe ? Have you considered that ?"

"Professional ruin, an inquest, a trial ; verdict, manslaughter ; sentence, doubtful ; probably imprisonment, possibly with hard labour, but I hardly think it will be more than imprisonment," said Mr. Dursley.

"More than imprisonment ? Oh ! Paul ! Paul ! Paul ! what a terrible thing it is. I almost wish the mistake were mine. Let us say it was, they would be more lenient to me than to you," and Miss Dursley leant her head on the chimney-piece and burst into tears.

Mr. Dursley rose, and put his arm round his sister's shoulders, and drawing her to him kissed her, as he explained that even if it came out in court that she had made up the medicine, he, and he only, was responsible ; he would be blamed for negligence in allowing her to do it, and would be more likely to lose all his patients for habitual carelessness than for one mistake. But there was not any question of keeping his patients, he had

already made up his mind to sell his practice and leave the neighbourhood ; his career at Lyneham was at an end. After such a fiasco as this he could not continue to practise there, although the Dursleys were so much respected, that probably some of his old patients would not forsake him, especially as it was well known that his sister had dispensed his medicines for years.

In fact, Paul knew no one would believe that he had made up the pills, even if he swore he had, and he did not intend to commit perjury ; he only meant to say he was responsible, and to keep his sister's name out of the case, if possible.

" Well, I am dead beat, I must go to bed for a few hours ; for I have a busy day before me to-morrow. Don't cry, Dorothy, go and try to get some more sleep," said Paul, as he took up his night candlestick and went to bed.

And Dorothy took his advice, and being a very healthy woman, not troubled with an excitable brain or a lively imagination, went to sleep till she was called ; but her sore trouble woke with her, and her eyes were very red when she appeared at the breakfast-table. She was one of those happily-constituted people who, in times of great trouble, can always find relief in a good cry, and having had one, can afford to be tolerably cheerful after it.

Paul looked pale and anxious ; he had not slept, tired as he had been when he went to bed. But it was Chloe that kept him awake ; not Peter's mistake, nor Sir John's death, nor the consequences to himself, though he thought of all these things. Just as the cup of happiness had seemed to be raised to his lips, it had been dashed from him, for he felt sure, from Chloe's manner that night, that she cared for him ; and he was equally sure, when she understood that her father had lost his life through his carelessness, and he could not entirely excuse himself, she would never marry him.

" I ought never to have allowed Dorothy to dispense the medicine ; that is the real truth. If I had made it up myself, always, this would not have happened, so it is almost as much my fault as old Peter's," was the conclusion he came to, as he tossed from side to side in his bed.

The first thing he did the next morning, before breakfast, was to write two telegrams—one to Dr. Dursley, telling him the patient had died of opium-poisoning during the night, and that he would send full particulars by post ; the other was to the local

coroner, advising him of the death, and asking him to fix an early hour for the inquest. He gave the telegraph forms to Fly, to take to the telegraph office. His policy, certainly, was not concealment, for he knew Fly would read the messages, and that in half-an-hour's time all Lyneham would know Sir John Dane had died from an over-dose of opium. In point of fact, he could hardly have taken a better method of publishing it, unless he had warned Fly to be discreet, and then wild horses would not have dragged the truth from him.

On his return from the post-office, Fly went to the file, on which he had put the great doctor's prescription the previous day, and, apparently to his satisfaction, found it was gone. He turned a somersault on the surgery floor to express his delight, and, on regaining his feet, muttered to himself:

"I guessed as much ; it was the great doctor's mistake, not *ours* ; they'd better have left Sir John to the master."

Then he went to the surgery door, and opening it, stood with his little legs wide apart, and his hands thrust down in his diminutive pockets, surveying the stable-yard, waiting for the groom to come and talk to him. It was beneath his dignity to go to the stable for a gossip, in his present important mood, burning though he was to impart the news of Sir John's death.

To attract James's attention he took to whistling tunes, in which he was a proficient ; and at the end of five minutes was rewarded by the appearance of the groom.

"Well, you are busy this morning, if I must tell a story. I wish I was your master, I'd learn you to waste your time, whistling," said James.

"I have done a tidy morning's work already. I have just telegraphed to Sir Peter Dursley, the swell London doctor ; and I have ordered a coroner's inquest to be held on one of our patients ; rather harder work than sweeping out two loose boxes, and that's about all you have done to-day," said Fly.

James was so curious to know further particulars, that he passed over the sneer on his own industry, and the absurdity of this scrap of humanity identifying himself with his master in this way.

"Coroner's inquest ! Who is dead then ?"

"Sir John Dane ; we have been attending him this month or

more ; but he has stole a march on us, and gone off suddenly from opium-poisoning."

"You don't say so. Opium-poisoning ! Who done it ?" asked James.

"Well, missus and I, we made up the medicine ; but I don't mind telling you, James, that I have reasons for thinking the mistake was not ours."

"Yours, indeed ! Soul alive, child, what do you want to go putting your neck in the rope before your time for ?"

"And it wasn't master's, either. He is out of it altogether, that I can swear. He had no more to do with Sir John's death than you or your horses," continued Fly.

"Whose fault was it, then ?"

Fly resorted to a parable :

"If this here earth was to make a mistake, and fall into the sun, whose fault should you say it was ?"

"Well, I suppose it would be the fault of Providence, but I should not dare to say so."

"That's about my position. I should not dare to say whose fault it was Sir John was poisoned last night, and no one else will dare to say it either, you bet. You make mistakes, James, I might make a mistake, or master, even, might ; but there are folks so high up in *our* profession that they can't make mistakes ; and if they do, no one believes they made 'em. There's my bell ;" and leaving James to digest this oracular sentence as best he might, Fly went to answer the bell.

While Fly had been thus engaged, Mr. Dursley and his sister had been breakfasting, and in the course of the meal had come to several important decisions as to their future.

"I shall sell this practice, Dorothy, and the dear old house, too. You'll regret it more than even I shall, but it must be done."

"My dear Paul, I can regret nothing, except that you have to suffer for Peter's mistake. Leaving, or even selling the old house, is a mere detail ; perhaps that friend of Peter's, whom he mentioned last night, would buy both."

"Perhaps he would ; that is a good idea of yours, Dorothy. At any rate, perhaps he would take charge of the practice while I am in Eastwich gaol, where I expect to spend some few months after the assizes. I will write to him in a day or two, if they send the case for trial, as they are bound to do."

"Oh, how dreadful it is, Paul, to think of you being brought up before the magistrates," and Miss Dursley began to cry.

"What does it matter, seeing I have done no wrong! I don't care a rush for that part of it. It is poor Sir John and Chloe, I am thinking of, not myself."

"No, you never think of yourself. By the way, I have kept the prescription."

"Why did you do that?"

"It may be useful later on. I thought it better not to destroy the prescription. I copied it into the book, but I put grains, not scruples, so there is no fear of Peter being inculpated; but I felt, all the while, I was sacrificing you to him. I wonder how it is we often have to sacrifice our best-beloved to those we love less?" said Dorothy with a touch of sentiment quite foreign to her usual prosaic affection.

"Am I your best-beloved, Dorothy? I thought Peter was your favourite brother," said Paul, most untruly.

"You did not think anything of the kind; you knew you always were my favourite. I should have married again and again, but for you."

"Well, when all this trouble is over and I am a free man again, we will go round the world together, and find some spot to live happy in ever after."

"Oh, Paul, that will be lovely; but I can't help hoping you will win Chloe in spite of all this trouble. If she really cares for you, she ought to be told the truth."

"Dorothy, no one must be told it. No one knows it, or will ever have the least suspicion of it, but you and I. Promise me, for my sake, if not for Peter's, you will keep the secret faithfully."

"I won't promise unconditionally. I promise I will never reveal it to any one, unless your life were in danger by suppressing it."

"My life! My dear girl, they won't hang me; it is not murder. I am not going to hide the fact that I did not make up the pills, or perhaps they might suspect foul play. But I accept your promise on those conditions, and now I must be off. I expect the coroner will fix three o'clock this afternoon for the inquest. You had better write to Peter at once and tell him you put two scruples of opium, instead of two grains, into those pills; and say I'll wire the verdict and write to him to-night."

"Shall you be in to lunch?"

"Yes, I can't go to Bilney till the afternoon; I have two bad cases to see this morning in the other direction."

And for the first time in his life Paul Dursley, who was naturally a very light-hearted man, went on his rounds with a very heavy heart.

(To be continued.)

"The Royal Forest of Dartmoor."

By THE REV. MORRIS FULLER, B.D.

MOST of our readers have probably settled for themselves, this year at all events, that very important question—Where shall we spend our holiday month, at home or abroad? and if the former, at the seaside or on some mountain range? When to a hard-worked man the time of recreation comes, and feeling that he has fairly earned a holiday, he determines to have it; and in taking it goes in for "a thorough change." Under these circumstances the holiday-seeker is wont to wing his flight as far from home as his time and purse permit. From this and other causes it has come to pass that the ambitious tourist, deeming even romantic "Caledonia, stern and wild," all too near at hand, whizzes away on some French or Austrian railroad, or fizzes along in a magnificent P. & O. steamer, which lands him at Gibraltar, whence he takes his way to Seville, Cadiz, Burgos, and thence on to the Pyrenees, and homeward through France, taking a peep at, and dive into, some of the delights of beautiful Paris. One man goes to Belgium to do the churches and picture galleries, while another steams up the Rhine, with its castle-studded banks, quite oblivious of the fact that there are two lovely rivers in the West Country which are competitors for the distinction of being its rival—the Dart and the Tamar. A third takes the now more stimulating tour of Norway and Sweden. Indeed we once heard of the case of a distinguished schoolmaster, who on one occasion, tricking his wing for a bolder flight, valorously secured a berth on the "Great Eastern," the biggest ship ever built; spent his midsummer vacation in what were then the Dis-united States of America, during the fratricidal war between North and South, and reached home again just one day before the next term began.

Whatever be the cause, the fact remains that many Englishmen, whilst tolerably well acquainted with what is best worth seeing in several foreign countries, know but little of the charms

with which their own homes are surrounded, and still less of those which abound in the remoter portions of the island. How few of them, even of West Country men, know anything, for example, of Dartmoor: probably not a tithe of those who were quite at home in Chamounix, or Paris! We speak from an experience of nearly thirty years, and we can remember that it was the easiest thing in the world in those days to get a lodging on or near the Moor; and to stay at the Duchy Hotel, Prince Town, was to share the delight of that quaint old hostelry with one or two moorland enthusiasts, and to have a cosy room to oneself. But, as the French say, *nous avons changé tout cela*. Last summer, for instance, so popular has the moor become that it was difficult to get a lodging anywhere on, or near, its outskirts. At Lydford—which is our present head-quarters—not a lodging was to be had, and a new aisle has been built at the old weather-beaten parish church of St. Petrock to accommodate the influx of visitors. At Chagford, which we visited, it was reckoned that upwards of seven hundred tourists were stowed away in Chagford, Gidleigh, Throwleigh and Drewsteignton, who filled the churches on Sunday to overflowing. At Yelverton, the number of new houses has so increased owing to the fine air of Roborough Down and the attraction of Dousland Barn, a new church has been projected for their occupants' use; whilst on the moor itself, we found Prince Town and its neighbourhood full of visitors, the hotels and lodgings doing a fine trade. So remarkable a change has come over the spirit of that dream, even in our own memory.

For Dartmoor—"Dertymore," as the natives call it—but let us not withhold its due title and appropriate honours: "The Royal Forest of Dartmoor"—presents obvious points of interest more various and delightful than perhaps can be found in any other district of equal size in the world. Its animal and vegetable creation are alike full of attractions. It is, as its poet Carrington says, "a wild and wondrous region."

The *botanist* may here find ample food for many a long day's rich banquet, especially in July, August, and even September, when the purple heather and golden gorse combine their beautiful colours in their fullest glory, and may discover in full luxuriance not a few plants which in other districts are either exceedingly rare or altogether unknown. Upon the rude granite

blocks and ancient moorstone walls, with which Dartmoor and its charming environment—and the fringe of the moor contains some of the most striking of its beauties—abound, there cling no less than thirty-eight different kinds of rare mosses and lichens, besides the commoner sort seen elsewhere. The *geologist* would find it a hard task to pick out any district in England which on the whole will repay his researches as well as Dartmoor. Its expanse of hill and dale presents indeed for his investigation problems in some parts of the science such as hardly occur in any other, or so compact a neighbourhood. The *ornithologist* may here startle many a rare bird, which, driven from the busy haunts of men by the mill wheel, the steam engine and the plough, has found a peaceful refuge amid these granite solitudes and wilds. The *sportsman* may be sure of a good day's sport, and at the end of it a bag of game of every variety, which is not to be by any means despised. It is the trysting place of the ramrods and fishing-rods. Foxes, too, are not scarce, and when

"A southerly wind and a cloudy sky,
Proclaim a hunting morning,"

a goodly number of Nimrods, some of them clad in the familiar "pink," which a strange English custom has permitted to supplant the more natural "Lincoln green," may be seen drawing together to the covert side, especially in the celebrated Dartmoor Hunt week at Bellaford—where we have seen old Mr. Coaker, the patriarch of the moor, surrounded by hosts of admirers—worthy rival of Exmoor and Cloutsham in the stag-hunting country; and soon the clear "view holla" echoes from rock to rock, hound after hound gives tongue, the valleys become vocal, and the grand old hills resound with the glad music of the chase.

The Dart, the Teign, the Tavy, the Taw, the Wallabrook and the ever-brawling Lyd (not Lid), joyously dancing over their rock-strewn beds, and tumbling over huge boulders in "stickles," or rushing down after some flood with a "porter colour" so dear to anglers, are the homes of trout of the most delicate flavour, and even salmon, some of them, *e.g.*, the Dart and the Taw, which supply a never-failing spring of pure pleasure and delight to the brethren of the gentle craft.

But pre-eminent above them all, the *antiquarian* finds here his truly classic ground. Food there is here for the appetite of even the most voracious, material for his deepest and most critical research, field for his triumphs, foundation for hypothesis and counter-hypothesis unnumbered—the natural and the scientific : themes of disquisition well nigh endless ; subjects for his sketch book ; specimens for his cabinet, objects ever varied and alluring, perhaps such as nowhere else can be met with in such a limited range—for "the Moor," as Devonians love to call it, is only a lozenge-shaped tract—an elevated granitic plateau of some twenty-four miles long by fifteen broad. And for all these—antiquarian, fisherman, sportsman, huntsman, ornithologist, geologist and botanist—there is an atmosphere the most pure, bracing and exhilarating, for though the weather in winter is severe, witness the late "blizzard" as it is called, yet, as Risdon says, "the air is wholesome and sweet ;" there is scenery of every gradation, from the most luxuriant softness, especially on its outskirts, to well nigh the sublimest grandeur. In its inmost recesses, and in either stage equally enchanting, there are views of singular beauty and seemingly limitless extent ; woods of richest green, streams of clearest crystal, Titanic "Tors," the local name, and wild rocks of granite's sternest majesty.

"Granitic Dartmoor, stern and wild, meet nurse for a poetic child."

It is the land of the poet, the artist, the dreamer and the enthusiast. The farmer, too, has his eye on Dartmoor when he drives up his cattle, where the sheep pick up that delightful herbage which gives the flavour to the mutton which the epicure loves so well. The moorsmen find here the best "bite of grass" for their celebrated breed of ponies, which, crossed with the Exmoor, is such a great success. The neighbouring tenantry, rejoicing in the rights of "venville" and "agistment," flock to their "turftythes" for peat fuel, and the common for pasture. Well, then, did Michael Drayton, the poet, nearly three centuries ago, apostrophise this "Dartmoor Forest," as it is called, thus :

"Therefore, dear Heath, live still in prosperous estate ;
And let thy well-fleeced flock, from morn till evening late
(By careful shepherds kept), rejoice thee with their praise ;
And let the merry lark, with her delicious lays,
Give comfort to thy plains : and let me only lie
(Though of the world contemned), yet gracious in thine eye."

And as it was three centuries ago, so it is now, and so it is likely to be till the crack of doom. An eminent scientist has lately written: "Silent will be the forges of Sheffield and Birmingham, clear at length the sky above the Carron Works, stilled the looms of Manchester and Belfast, rusting and unused but for horse power here and there the long busy lines of the railway. The agriculturist, too, will have his share of the common woe. Widely different will be the lot of Devon from that of the flat country, with all its grain-producing facilities. That which is elsewhere wanting, from the failure of coal and dearth of wood, Devon will still have in lasting abundance, for her streams are everywhere—not sluggish, impure, useless streams, but sparkling, active, full of life and power and ready to be applied to the thousand uses to which man's ingenuity may turn them. All that will soon be wanting elsewhere Devonshire will have and continue to have in abundance."—(Rev. E. Spencer's "Remarks on Dartmoor," 75.)

It is to the region over which nature with a lavish hand has scattered beauties and glories such as these, that we now invite our readers to accompany our steps. Its dimensions indeed are not of unmanageable extent. If our readers will refer to the Ordnance map—the sheet of which only one half is devoted to Dartmoor—they will find that this region lies between Okehamp-ton on the north, Brent (a station on the South Devon Railway, for the iron road now completely encircles the moor) on the south, Moreton Hampstead (locally called Moorton) on the east, and Tavistock (the "Raining Queen of the Moor," as it is called, from the quantity of rain which falls, a fact which Charles II. never forgot) on the west. They will perceive that a line drawn across it would nowhere exceed 24 miles in length—"it may be described as a huge lozenge-shaped wilderness of granite with a longer diagonal of some 24 miles almost in a north and south direction, and a shorter one, nearly east and west, of about 15 miles." They will read the names of many rivers and brooks, by which to the number of some scores it is intersected, and some hundreds of "Tors" (a word derived from the Celtic *twr*, same as in "tower," a "heap" or "pile"), by which it is dotted in every direction. They will see at a glance that it is a rugged, uncultivated swampy, marshy (for the peat holds the water like a great sponge), sparsely populated, and almost mountainous tract, in

short an elevated granitic plateau with billowy stone waves, and they will further discover that within its actual limits and in its immediate neighbourhood there are numerous mines, which, we may add, are of tin and copper, and some of them have been worked without interruption from the time of the Romans—the "old men" being supposed to be of Phœnician origin. We may add that the "Tors" are all (save one) composed of granite, many of them being of great extent, and most of them of every fantastic variety of form.

Nature's primæval wilderness : intense solitude, unbroken stillness, save only the distant tinkling of the sheep bell, the murmur of the rushing stream, or the shriek of some wild moor bird overhead ; an interminable expanse of rugged waste, widening plain, or common and swelling hill : such are the main characteristics of the moor proper.

From the summit of some lofty Tor we get a comprehensive view of the moor ; in the words of its poet Carrington :

" Nothing that has life
Is visible : no solitary flock
At wide will ranging through the silent moors,
Breaks the deep-felt monotony : and all
Is motionless, save where the giant shades
Flung by the passing cloud, glide slowly o'er
The grey and gloomy wild."

But enterprise and capital for all that have made considerable inroads upon this wild waste. The farms on its outskirts have pushed themselves inwards, and filched from the domain of fern and broom and furze and heather.

Far into the moor the plough has been felt ; and in many parts of it scattered cottages and lonely farmsteads dot the waste. The mixture of modern civilization and nature's primæval wilderness thus created, form one of the most striking features of moorland scenery. There are many spots where the explorer may take his stand and gaze over a widely-spread range of verdant meadows and fruitful cornfields" (*i.e.*, of barley and oats), and on his turning round and looking in the opposite direction, the eye finds nothing to rest upon but a wide expanse of billowy waste, vast plain and heath-clad hill, crowned with the mighty Tors. But along the outskirts of this wild realm, and down almost every side of it, flow those bright and sparkling streams, which

contribute so much to the beauty of Devon, whose banks, often swelling into lofty hills, are clad with the richest verdure, interspersed with rugged granite rocks and huge boulders, moss-strewn and lichen-clad. Then "the Moor" itself (as the Devonians love to call it) is a picture of stern grandeur, set in a frame of the softest and most luxuriant scenery. The words of the pure and graceful poetess are minutely accurate—more so than probably she was herself aware of :

" Wild Dartmoor ! Thou that midst thy mountains rude
Hast rob'd thyself with haughty solitude ;
As a dark cloud on summer's clear blue sky,
A mourner, circled with festivity."

The general aspect of this region is, as we have said, that of an elevated granitic plateau, of an undulating and billowy appearance, varying in height above the sea-level from 400 to 2,050 feet, its mean height being computed at about 1,782 feet, *i.e.*, the height of Great Mis Tor (where the celebrated Mis Tor "Pan" is to be seen). De la Beche tells us that the granite of Dartmoor is, as a whole, a coarse-grained mixture of quartz, felspar and mica, the last sometimes white, at others black, the two sorts of mica occasionally occurring in the same mass. It is very frequently porphyritic, from the presence of large crystals of felspar. Even those who know next to nothing of geology can hardly fail to be struck with the extraordinary size of these crystals, and with the binary form which they sometimes assume. It is "here and there" schorlaceous, but the latter character is chiefly confined to the outskirts, where the granite adjoins the slates. The schorl not unfrequently occurs in radiating nests of variable size and abundance. A complete passage may generally be traced between the compound of schorl and quartz, usually called schorl-rock, and the ordinary granite. The mica usually disappears as the schorl begins to be abundant, but sometimes the granite rock is a mixture of mica, schorl, felspar and quartz, in nearly equal proportions. After the absence of mica, the next mineral which commonly disappears is the felspar, leaving the compound a mixture of schorl and quartz, the former sometimes occurring in radiating nests in the latter, but more commonly the two minerals form an aggregate in nearly equal proportions.*

* "Report on the Geology of Devon and Cornwall"—the authority for all the geological statements in the text.

The rocks by which it is surrounded, and through which, in the dim ages of the distant past, it has thrust itself with gigantic force, are of the carbonaceous series, the limestone, shales and trappean formation being most conspicuous among them. On the W., N.W. and N. we are told "bands of trappean rock skirt" the moor, "bending in conformity with the granite outline, as if they had been thrust out of their original by the protrusion of the granite." When, however, the grits of the carbonaceous series are in close proximity to the granite. they assume the character of quartz rock, as in the neighbourhood of Okehampton. In similar situations the granite, too, is very beautiful. There is, for example, a spot about two miles from Okehampton (close to the spot where the camp is placed every year for artillery practice), up the valley of the West Okenut, in the direction of Tavistock, where white granite is to be found. It occurs only in one spot of limited area, among carbonaceous rocks, freestones and limestones, such as are constantly found on the skirts of the moor. It should be, however, remarked that some of the best and finest-grained granite that the writer has come across on the moor is obtained on Stannon Ridge—a material which the writer used, with such good effect, in building his school-chapel at Postbridge, not far from the celebrated clapper bridge over the East Dart, and at the foot of Merripit Hill. Sir Henry Beche says, "It is a beautiful material," referring to the white granite, "and may be obtained in large quantities; at a short distance it has the appearance of statuary marble." The railway from Okehampton to Lydford passes very near the spot.

There are many curious and interesting problems in connection with the granite formation of Dartmoor, on which it is impossible to dwell within the limits of a short paper. They have been discussed with learning, patience and consummate ability, by Mr. Ormerod, of Chagford, a local antiquarian and geologist, and probably one of the best scientific authorities on all matters connected with the moor. Nor must we forget to mention the names of Spence Bate, Rowe, and the other authors of papers in connection with the transactions of the Plymouth and Devonshire associations, and last, but not least, "A few remarks on Dartmoor," by the Rev. E. Spencer, an unpretending little *brochure*, but one of the most charming and suggestive works we

have come across on the subject. A question which has been much discussed is as to whether the granite had occupied its present position anterior to the new red sandstone, or posterior to the deposit of that rock. Again, the variety of effects produced by the protrusion of granite through beds of various rocks, which now lie around it, is extremely interesting and instructive. Thus slates become flints, fine clay-slate is turned into "a felspathic rock, striped with different colours in the original structural lines of the slate," and so on. But the questions are endless, and a glance, for instance, at Mr. Spencer's recent work is enough to show how much can be said for the various theories which have been broached, and how much really "new light" that critical writer has thrown upon the problems which cluster round Dartmoor. And the same may be said of another charming writer, Mr. Baring-Gould, who is producing quite a revolution in the old-world theories of this interesting region.

But we must not linger on these topics, captivating though they may be. We wish to "personally conduct" our readers to some of the finest spots of the grand old moor. Supposing, then, we start from the eastern portion of the moor, say from Moreton Hampstead, for Lustleigh, the first station on the line, which runs through twelve miles of as picturesque and beautiful scenery as can be desired, up the Teign Valley, and walk to Lustleigh Cleave, a favourite haunt of moorland enthusiasts, a high ridge covered with granite masses, a huge collection of rocks, containing some of the most picturesque piles to be seen on Dartmoor. It is about a thousand feet above the level of the railway, and about three-quarters of a mile long, and it covers the entire slope of the hill side, from the summit to the bed of the Bovey (called Buvvy), which flows along its western base. Among the "clatters" is a famous rocking or "Logan" stone, called the "Nutcrackers." It moves easily and may readily be recognized by the quantities of nutshells under and around it, by which previous visitors have tested its powers. Parson's Loaf, or Mopstone, is another fanciful name given to another of its "clatters." As we stand at the top of the hill and look around on the charming panorama, we are fully repaid for the labour of climbing the steep path which led us from the village. We may, however, remind our readers that bright, sunny days are not the best for seeing moorland scenery

to perfection, or witnessing its atmospheric effects. It is when the mist is rolling up the valley, and the fog-compelling cloud mantles over hill and peak, lifting now and again, and a sudden gleam of sunshine shoots athwart the perspective, that the moor is seen to best advantage. If to this be added the barking of the dogs and the jovial cries of the huntsmen, heard but not seen, except now and again, which was our first experience of such a scene under Pu Tor, the effect is indescribable. But to resume. Turning our backs towards Lustleigh, and looking down the "Cleave" in a southerly direction, we may distinguish Torquay in the distance flashing white in the sunlight (as indeed we have even seen the same effects from the top of Hessary Tor, behind Prince Town, locally called Princes Town), Newton-Abbott in the same direction, only nearer, and Stover, the Duke of Somerset's shooting seat, with its noble park and placid lake. In front the "Cleave" (so named from the cleavage in the rocks, as in Tavy Cleave) stretches its broad rough back along, clothed with the yellow gorse or purple heather, and thickly strewn with granite blocks of immense size and fantastic outline, in wild disorder (called "clatter" or "clitter," it being not uncommon to soften the *a* into *i*); but it is this word "clatter," which tells its own tale, of which more anon. At the bottom, far below us, winds the bright little river, the Bovey, a very rival to the Mew or Meavy, the brightest of medium-sized rivers, and almost without colouration as it flows on to meet the Cad, a river of very different origin and colour, at Shaugh Bridge, to form the Plym, with its trees and flowers, opposite to the hanging wood of Houndtor (marked on the Ordnance map as Hounter Tor): a sylvan scene of singular beauty, boldly running out promontory-wise at right angles to the river, and overhanging it in most precipitous and exceedingly perilous fashion. It is in truth exceedingly steep, and requires wary walking on the part of those who adventure into its shades in search of woodcock or of fern, both of which hereabouts abound. Beyond this the tower of Manaton Church is seen peeping over the hills, whilst further still the majestic rocks of Houndtor, Bowerman's Nose (of which more anon) and Heytor, the monarch of the moor, rise like mighty fortresses, guardians of the distant view and landscape. This is how the place where we are standing looked to Mr. Walter Besant, from Hamildon Down: "Beyond Manaton Tor you look down upon the

rocky sides of Lustleigh Cleave. Turning your head to the east and south-east there rises before you a glorious pile of hills, one beyond the other. There is Hayne Down with its boulders thrown down the front as if they were pebbles shaken from a young giant maiden's apron. This is, I believe, the scientific and geological explanation of their origin. There is Hound Tor, with its granite castle; behind it Hey Tor, with its two great black pyramids; on the right of Hey Tor, there are Rippon Tor and Honeybag. Six miles, hidden away among the hills and woods, is Widdicombe Church, the cathedral of the moor. Turn to the west and eight miles away you can see Yes Tor. South of Yes Tor there stretches the open moor, bounded by more tors in every direction."

But to resume the thread of our narrative. By a narrow and winding path, passing in front of Raven Tor, and working in and out among the furze and clatter, descend we the hill and make our way to the side of the little river. Let us walk a hundred yards up stream to Foxworthy, whose picturesque old water mill, now no longer used, and reminding us of the one at Holy Street, near Chagford, which has been limned by so many artists—now, alas, in ruins—and the lovely nooks amid which it is embowered, have often worthily inspired the artist's pencil, as the London exhibitions of pictures, and the windows of its print shops bear ample witness. How exquisite is the poetry of the scene: Clear as crystal flows the stream at our feet, dancing and sparkling over granite blocks of every shape and size, thickly strewing its course, whilst their brethren, clad in garb of moss and lichen, just as thickly strew the banks, mingled with tree and shrub, and fern, and gorse, and flowers of every hue. Hard by—itself a perfect picture—is an old wall hidden beneath an enveloping growth of lichens, and if our visit is in the early summer, we shall see the wild moss twining over its graceful tendrils, to be replaced in autumn by the bunches of ripe and ripening fruit, hanging in elegant festoons.

But we may not linger, for there is work to be done. We may not, ensnared by these charms, rest content in the vestibule of the mighty temple which rises before us: our task is to penetrate into its inner chambers. Retracing then our way "down stream," we shall in a few minutes discover a bridge of nature's own handiwork called Horsham Steps. This consists of huge masses

of primeval granite irregularly heaped together in the bed of the stream, and lying far above the level of the water, which flows quite out of sight below. Crossing this we come to a homestead called Foxworthy, nor are we far from the celebrated "Becky Falls," to form which the river precipitates over a succession of rocks, altogether some eighty feet in altitude, which are among "the lions," if not the three wonderful things of Dartmoor. Manaton is only one mile from these, which can be reached either by crossing the Cleave by the bridle path, or by a more circuitous drive through some typical Devonshire lanes. Need we say that we are in the very classic ground of picnics, and many a bright and cheery party could these rocks and running streams tell us of, had they tongues to do so? And we may take this opportunity of impressing upon our readers the importance of careful attention to the commissariat department when touring upon Dartmoor. When we tell them in the proverb of the county that "the shelves of Dartmoor are very high and very bare," we speak from a feeling of our privations in the days of our novitiate. We may add that in taking walking tours across the moor it is well also to have a compass in case of fogs and mists, which are very frequent, and a stranger may easily lose his way. But a man with good lungs and muscle need not fear to penetrate into its interior, only he should be good for twenty-five miles, and be careful; a little caution is all that is necessary, and certain places, as Fox Tor Mire and the spots known as "Quakers," should be avoided. If the tourist loses himself, the best thing is to follow down the first stream he comes to. It is sure to lead him to some road or path.

But we must not linger too long by the margin of the stream. Make we our way to the pleasant village of Manaton, with its massive battlemented church, its beautifully situated rectory house, its village green with avenues of trees, its overhanging rock, its lovely near and distant views. We are making for "Bowerman's Nose," that "giant of the moor." We pass down a narrow lane, deep in shade and rich in ferns, wild flowers and wild fruits, and soon by the most rugged of roads are wending our way across the moor. The whole slope of the hill, up which we are going, is strewn with masses of granite, those near its summit being of larger size and, some of them especially, of grotesque form. From a holly tree by the road-side, under

which we may rest awhile, we obtain the best view of this remarkable hill or heap, which is called "Bowerman's Nose." From this spot its appearance is so completely that of a gigantic human form, carved out of the solid rock, that a spectator can with difficulty persuade himself that it is not wrought by the hand of man, as Carrington says :

"High it towers
"Above the hill's bold brow, and seen from far,
Assumes the human form—a granite god!
To whom in days long flown the suppliant knee
In trembling homage bow'd. The hamlets near
Have legends rude connected with the spot
(Wild swept by every wind) on which he stands,
The Giant of the Moor!"

On a closer inspection the natural formation of the monster is apparent. It consists of several corners or layers of granite, which have been thrown up in one of those terrible commotions to which the moor was subject ages ago, and which have arranged themselves in this weird and fantastic fashion.

This "rock idol" is on the side of the Hayne Valley, and we are informed by a living authority that it was called after a person of that name who lived at Hound Tor.

Among the most striking of the natural features of the moor, the Tors stand conspicuous. These, with one exception, are of granite, and they vary greatly in size, shape and height, though there are some features which they all possess in common. The highest is Yes Tor, near Okehampton (2,025 ft.), a name which is supposed to be a corruption of East Tor. From its summit there is a magnificent view. On the north we see the land away to the "Severn Sea," Coddon Hill, Dunkerry Beacon, Exmoor, and the high land near Baggy Point, between Woolacombe Sands and Croyde Bay, preventing our seeing its waters; but Barnstaple Bay lies clear before us, and we get a good view of the ocean, with Lundy Island in the distance, till the Cornish hills shut it out in the west. Southwards we can see other big brothers of the height, breaking the monotony of the moor, till we get a glimpse of the "silver streak" of the sea off Dartmouth. High Willhayes, the next to Yes Tor, in reality another peak of the same name, is twenty-five feet higher than it. The recent surveys show it to be 2,050 ft., the most lofty peak on the moor. The

Tors in the neighbourhood of that town are very fine, and there is indeed no part of the moor in which the views, so far as they depend on the grouping of the Tors, are grander than in this. Near Prince Town they are also numerous and fine; to wit, Mis Tor (1,760 ft.), with its celebrated Pan; on the north Hessary Tor, which dominates the place. On the east there are Crochen Tor, where the Judge's Chair is to be seen, where the Stannaries Courts were held on behalf of the Duchy of Cornwall, to settle the disputes of the tin streamers and others—Lydford Tor, Bairdown Tor—which is opposite to Wistman's Wood, or wood of the wise men, one of the wonders of Dartmoor. And on the west of Prince Town there are Lether Tor, Sheeps-tor, the home of the Pixies, Sharpitor, King Tor, Pu Tor, near Sampford Spiney, and last, but not least, one of the most whimsical looking of Tors, Vixen Tor. These Tors are large irregular masses of granite, almost always cresting the loftiest part of a hill, thus differentiating Dartmoor from Exmoor, which latter does not possess one, and assuming, as viewed from different points, and in different lights, which are sometimes quite puzzling, the most picturesque and fantastic variety of form. The hills on which they stand are sometimes on one side only, sometimes all around, and thickly strewn with fragments of granite of all sizes and shapes imaginable, standing on end, lying on their side, prostrate on their back; assuming, in fact, every conceivable attitude, looking as if in the hoary distance of long past ages they had descended from the sky in a mighty stone shower. The basis of all these hills is strewn with detritus, called clatter or clitter, a name locally given, which seems to point to what the natives themselves had seen with their eyes and heard with their ears. The word itself speaks for itself, and recalls cleavage, confusion, sliding down, tumbling, noise, and a general rocky topsyturveydom. Perhaps the finest specimen of this is at Tavy Cleave, where, at the foot of Gur Tor (the highest in the cleave), the clatter lies about in indescribable confusion.

We will mention some of the chief of the moorland giant fortresses. Far away the most celebrated is Heytor, about four miles from Bovey Tracey, and 1,521 ft. above the sea level. It stands almost on the outskirts of the moor, and is a most conspicuous object for miles round. The two rocks are shaped not unlike the humps on the back of a camel. It consists of

two distinct rocks, at some distance from each other, on one of which there is a "rock basin" like Mis Tor Pan, of which objects and other monumental remains there is a good deal to be said.

Suffice it to say that these "rock basins" are pointed to as an evidence that:

"These hills,
With shout ferocious, and the mingled shriek
Resounded, when to Jupiter up flamed
The human hecatomb. The frantic seer
. . . . loved
To worship on the mountain's breast sublime,
The earth his altar, and the bending heaven
His canopy magnificent."

The other rock is a magnificent piece of granite, weathered into a rounded form on the west and south-west. From the summit of both Tors the view is so beautiful as amply to repay the toil of climbing—a toil which is reduced to a minimum by steps cut into the solid rock. The help of the latter is very necessary when the wind is high. Indeed, in very boisterous weather the ascent would be impossible.

In the neighbourhood of Heytor Crag—as they are sometimes called—about a mile and a-half west, in the direction of Moreton, is Hound Tor—Hounter Tor—an object of great grandeur and extent, viewed from the neighbourhood of Becky Falls

This Tor—the group is sometimes known as the Cluster Rocks—presents, from one point of view, a solid castellated appearance, and in the early twilight might, without difficulty, be mistaken for a gigantic fortress, with tower and battlement and bastion complete; the ruined walls and shattered fragments of some great mediæval castle, seen from another point of view—from King Tor, for instance, and Hookner Down. The rocks of which the Tor is composed have lost the appearance of a solid compact mass, and put on the aspect of strange, wild, living creatures, with arms extended, and wildly groping over the waste. Then, as the spectator takes his stand near the Tor, somewhat to the S.E. of it, he may well imagine that each rock of which the mass is composed is an animal *couchant* on the top of a mighty pedestal. These rocks extend in a line of eight, or ten, or a dozen, and from their supposed resemblance to a pack of hounds derive their name.

But no description of the Tors of Dartmoor would be complete

which omitted to mention that noble phalanx on its western escarpment, which faces the westering sun and dominates the old Church Town (the parish church of Dartmoor Forest) of Lydford, formerly, at the time of the Conquest an important place, being the military key to Cornwall, sending two burgesses to parliament, where was a royal mint, with its castle (which gave it the name of "Lydford law"), its falls, its gloomy ravines, its gorge, and woods, and falling cascade. Taking it all in all we know nothing like it in all the West Country. Going northwards from Smear Ridge, which overlooks Horndon and Hill Bridge, we come first to Hare Tor (1,714 ft.), then Sharp Tor, underneath which is Doe Tor (notice the numbers of Tors whose names are connected with animals), then Brad Tor, or Bra Tor (1,510 ft.) with its Jubilee Cross, placed on its summit by the celebrated Dartmoor artist, Widgery, and which has now been included in the numerous crosses of Dartmoor, quite one of its special features, but which we have not had space to touch upon. Then, in the same direction, we come to Arms Tor and Great Links, or Lynx, Tor (1,910 ft.), a magnificent fortress-like Tor; Great Nodden, which is without the usual granitic pile on the top, a Tor for which we have always had a sneaking affection, as it seems almost to pourtray its own passing moods, as if a sentient thing, *i.e.*, its broad and ample superficies gives full play to the effects of light and shadow, which are such a striking feature of moorland scenery, and finally, Sourton Tor, which is justly admired as one of the most conspicuous Tors in the western escarpment, although one of the wettest, from whose lofty summit the fire of the Jubilee day was seen from several counties, so the then worthy Rector of Bridestowe informed us, and as far as the Land's End. This noble range of Tors lies between Blackdown, Brent Tor (the only really volcanic-looking peak, 1,000 feet, from *brennan*, to burn), and Lydford on the west, and Tavy Cleave, a wild and romantic spot, with Gur Tor and its innumerable clatters in the east; and further on, in the same direction, is Cranmere Pool, a mere black, peaty, depressed slough, supposed to be the source of all the rivers on Dartmoor. This is the only attempt at a lake, or even a tarn, on the moor, except Clasywell pool, under Lether Tor, which was made by human hands—the "old men," *i.e.*, the tin streamers of antiquity, probably of Phœnician origin

The Dart, of course, is the principal river, which, indeed, gives the name to the moor, for Dartmoor is, as Risdon, in his survey, calls it, "the mother of many rivers ;" and Carrington styled it the "land of streams," of which the principal are the Dart, the Teign, the Avon, the Erme, the Yealm, the Plym, the Tavy, the Taw and the Lyd. But what shall we say of the impetuous Lyd, which, joined by the Wallabrook and Doe Tor Brook, comes rushing torrent-like between the range we have just described and Higher Down, just above the Dartmoor Inn, where there is in summer a small encampment of soldiers? Torrential, indeed, it is now at times ; but what would it be if it were not for the peaty covering of the moor, which acts like a sponge in checking the output? But for this peat, which covers the otherwise bald head of Dartmoor, be it remembered, these moorland streams would carry destruction upon the lowlands. Once freed from the originating ground, the waters of the Lyd, taking this as a specimen of the others, follow the only track presented by the granite heights right and left. No windings and wearing of banks are there, as in lower regions with softer banks. Its appearance, then, till it leaves the moor, and for a long time afterwards, is a series of small pools, confined by granitic masses, united by miniature cataracts, known by the name of "stickles." This chaplet-like aspect is due to the action of the streams themselves : they have rolled along stones for short distances, and being unable to do so once, they have become wedged, and thus a pool has been formed. Continuing onwards, the river reaches the confines of the moor, and makes its way into the lowlands as if it had cut itself out a channel with a knife. Right and left stand the rocks, as if cleft by the force of the rushing waters ; and now can be seen some of the most striking effects of the power or force of the waters. At Kitt's Steps there is a perfect cleavage in the solid rock, and a heavy fall of water which rushes with hisses and a roar through the cavernous and umbrageous gorge, cutting its way under Lydford Bridge, which spans the chasm, ninety feet deep, till it reaches the famous cascade, which Carrington writes of in those exquisite lines of his, and the artists of the west delight in. Perhaps, from the latter's point of view, the cascade is too perpendicular, and the glen is somewhat confined, so that it is scarcely possible to see it obliquely. But, for all that, it is an exceedingly graceful fall (its

local poetical name, the "White Lady," is very appropriate), and it is the highest in the west country.

We must, however, hasten to a conclusion: There are several topics we had marked out for discussion, especially on the antiquarian side. We should have liked to have said something about rock basins, kistvaens, dolmens, parallelitha, cromlechs; cairns, barrows, hut circles, and other monumental relics, but space forbids. We should have liked to have said more about the peaty covering of Dartmoor. Still, we must not leave the subject without a word about the atmosphere of the moor and its life-giving properties. Though wet and foggy, and sometimes very rough, "the air," as Risdon, in his survey, tells us, "is wholesome and sweet." The atmosphere is of the purest; not a particle of solid matter (such as we see in a sunbeam shot into one of our carpeted rooms) floats in it. Light, and a sufficient quantity of condensing vapour, to make it visible, is all we look on in a ray of sunlight slanting through a small opening in a cloudy sky. And, as if the eye were not a reliable witness, the lungs take up the parable. Instinctively the chest-walls expand, as if craving to gather in as much of that sweet, wholesome, undefiled air as possible. This is it that makes walks on the moor so invigorating. It is not only the exercise, excellent though that be, but the penetrating into the most delicate parts of the frame of air completely uncontaminated. The same benefit, though in a lesser degree, applies to persons residing for a time on Dartmoor, provided they can, and will, leave the shelter of the house, with its peopled atmosphere, to breathe the untainted air that surrounds them. This is why Dartmoor is the great sanatorium of the West Country; and people have found out its life-giving properties by crowding about its sides, as we alluded to in the opening of the paper. The health of the soldiers encamped at Okehampton, Belstone and Lydford, even in the exceptionally wet season, has been excellent. No epidemics are known on the moor, nor is phthisis ever found among its aborigines, who are remarkable for the clearest and most lovely eyes, both in form and colour.

The future of Devon is, indeed, a bright one, for she has Dartmoor as her backbone. "While the sun of long past ages," to quote Mr. Spencer's recent book once more, "has ceased for ever to rise above its coalpit horizon, the sun of to-day, however long that 'to-day' last, will still supply it with all. On and on

will its power be exerted to raise from ocean those waters which, condensing on the moor, fill its never-failing streams. Slowly, but surely, has the lesson been learnt that *force* is one, and that all its phases can be made to pass one into the other. The same water power that can turn the mill can be easily converted into light and heat ; and that which is elsewhere wanting, from the failure of coal and dearth of wood, Devon will still have in abundance" (p. 74). The streams of Dartmoor, which are poured down continually into the lowlands—streams active, sparkling, and full of life—can never dry up ; and they will supply us, at our will, "with either heat, light, or electricity ; and will also use their power, force, or energy to fill the compressed air vessels, that will work our rails and tramways, and help the cyclist up the hills that now compel him to dismount." With Devon, then, we repeat, the future is full of life and light and hope, "for a force, lasting as herself, will ever pour out his horn of abundance on Dartmoor ; which, scattering its contents through its hundred streams, will cease, at length, to be considered as to the several advantages it supplies, and be viewed as what it is—the one universal benefactor and life-giver to a prosperous and flourishing county."

Once more we take a last look at the glorious old moor, and bid it farewell, in the words of the "poet of Dartmoor :"

"Ye forms sublime,
 Adieu, that people the great moor ; the tor,
 The hallow'd cairn, the everlasting rocks,
 Moulded by time into a million shapes
 Of beauty and of grandeur ; and adieu,
 Ye voices that on the wanderer's ear
 Ever refreshing come. The flow of rill
 And music of the cataract, and leap
 Of mountain stream, and sigh of mountain breeze
 And, scared by the intruder man, the rush
 Of the wild bird. . . .
 Those harmonies divine, at morn, noon, eve,
 Have blessed my moorland pilgrimage."

The Lady of the Manor.

By MARY MACLEOD.

CHAPTER I.

"It's 'a dreadful bother, but I suppose we shall have to go," grumbled Charlotte.

"Bother! Why, I think it will be fun," said Evelyn.

"I want to go," whined Owen.

"Then you just can't," said Charlotte. "It will be much too late for you to sit up."

"Oh, mother, say I may!" cried the spoilt child. His voice rose high above all others at the table.

"I wish, Miss Gray, you'd teach Owen not to be so troublesome," said the eldest Miss Escott with an annoyed glance at a harassed-looking girl who had sat silent during the whole course of lunch.

"Owen," she said reprovingly, but the boy shook off her gentle hand with a pettish gesture.

"I'm not going to do what *you* tell me," he said roughly.

"Mother, say I may go to the concert to-night."

"Well, well—we'll see."

"Hurrah! That means 'yes.'"

The boy flung his table-napkin in the air, pushed back his chair, and clattered out of the room.

"Really, Owen gets worse and worse every day," said Charlotte. "We ought to apologize to Mr. Mildmay for his bad behaviour."

She turned with an amiable smile to a visitor who was present—a smooth-faced, sleepy-eyed young man with flaxen hair and very white hands.

"The boy is high-spirited; he only needs a little judi-

cious management, which he never gets," said Owen's mother. Her cold, grey eyes rested for a moment on the young governess, who reddened under their expression of tacit disapproval.

Edwin Mildmay's lazy glance took in something of the state of affairs.

"I don't envy any one the management of Master Owen," he said in his slow drawl. "He seems a regular young pickle. But tell me about to-night. What is the excitement?"

"Only a stupid concert at the Parish-Room," said Charlotte, curling her thin lip in disdain.

"As Lady of the Manor, of course I am expected to patronize all these local affairs," explained Mrs. Escott to Mildmay.

"We had to take tickets, so we may as well go," interposed Evelyn. "Besides, you forget, Chatty, the village schoolmaster is to be there, and the Wentworths say he plays the violin *divinely*."

"And are we to have the pleasure of hearing this village genius to-night?" inquired Mildmay.

"Yes, but he's not a *village* genius," said Charlotte. "Little Mere does not produce gems of such brilliancy. The usual schoolmaster is away on sick leave, and this man is taking his place for a few months."

"Mr. Benson, the vicar, thinks no end of him," said Evelyn. "He wanted Mr. Armadale to go and board at the Vicarage."

"Such a mistake—taking people of that class out of their proper position," said Mrs. Escott. "Mr. Benson may be a worthy man, but he must be singularly devoid of common sense."

"But Mr. Armadale refused to go—he said he preferred to be independent. So he lives all by himself in that ugly school-house; he has just three rooms at one end of it."

"It's a marvel to me how Evelyn contrives to pick up all the gossip of the neighbourhood," observed Charlotte.

"Only when it's about interesting people," returned the younger sister mischievously. "When they take the shape of fascinating strangers, who play superbly on the fiddle——"

"A village schoolmaster!" said the other, in tones of withering scorn.

Gillian Gray, the young governess, sat in her place at table, and made no sign, but her heart was hot within her. The schoolmaster was no stranger to her. She had met him several times at the Vicarage, where she took Owen for a Latin lesson three times a week. She had heard him play on the violin, and knew that Evelyn's random remarks were more than usually near the truth when she spoke of his playing "superbly." If only it had been her good fortune to go to the concert to-night!

"Miss Gray," Mrs. Escott's cold voice broke in upon her meditations, "as Owen is so anxious to go to-night, of course, you will have to go, too. We cannot be bothered looking after him."

"Very well," said Miss Gray. She trusted that no one observed the sudden glow of pleasure that lighted up her face.

So it came to pass that when the party from the Manor House took the seats reserved for them in the front row, Gillian's modest black grenadine figured among the gay-coloured silks of her companions.

The concert went on, one performer followed another with varying popularity, and now a little wave of excitement rippled through the hall. The ladies in the front row nodded and whispered to each other, the village boys in an upper gallery thrust forward tousled heads, and clattered their heavy boots.

"Is that what you consider *fascinating*?" said Mildmay, in an audible aside to Evelyn, as a young man stepped forward on the platform. Certainly no greater contrast to his own appearance could well have been found. The new-comer was slight and spare; his black hair lay in a level sweep across his forehead; his dark eyes were deeply set; his clean-shaven face was thin almost to gauntness. Mildmay stroked his thick auburn moustache, and thought complacently how unluckily handicapped some poor mortals were with respect to personal appearance.

The schoolmaster's eyes ran lightly along the front rank of spectators. If they made a slightly longer pause at one black-

gowned figure no one, except perhaps that individual, was acute enough to observe it. The accompanist at the piano struck a few opening chords and then, raising his bow, Armadale drew it lightly across the strings.

After that, there was only one opinion in Little Mere—the schoolmaster was a genius! Mrs. Escott knew little about music and cared less, but when her next neighbour, Lady Wentworth, waxed loud in her enthusiasm she thought it well to be in no way behindhand.

At the close of the performance, she summoned the vicar, Mr. Benson, and intimated that she desired to honour Mr. Lewis Armadale by allowing him to be presented to her.

Mr. Benson made his way to the improvised green-room. It was empty except for the schoolmaster, all the other amateur performers having joined their friends among the audience. When the vicar entered, Armadale was standing motionless, gazing moodily at the dying embers in the small grate.

“Come, Armadale, you are the hero of the evening,” said Mr. Benson. “A high honour is to be conferred on you.”

The young man’s sombre face lighted up with a pleasant smile.

“Indeed! What may that be?”

“The Lady of the Manor desires an introduction.”

“Oh, bother!” said Armadale ungratefully, “I’m not in the mood for silly chatter; I want to be off to my own little den.”

“My young friend, you don’t know on which side your bread is buttered,” said the vicar, slipping a gently-detaining hand through Armadale’s arm. “Mrs. Escott, you know.”

“Whom did you say?” Armadale stopped in the act of reaching for his great coat.

“Mrs. Escott, who lives at Little Mere Manor House.”

There was a momentary pause.

“Oh, well—Mrs. Escott—yes, I’ll come and speak to Mrs. Escott,” said the schoolmaster in a slow and reflective manner.

CHAPTER II.

LITTLE MERE school-house lay at one end of the village, where the high road struck across the open heath. It was a modern, ugly building, yellow-brick, with a slated roof, but it was tolerably comfortable. In addition to the class-rooms it contained accommodation for the master—a small bedroom, kitchen and sitting-room. One of the women from the village came in each day to do what was necessary, but the master's needs were few, and for the most part he waited on himself.

School was over at four o'clock, and not long after that, on the day following the concert, the vicar's long legs might have been seen stalking up the cinder-path which led to Armadale's modest abode. He found the schoolmaster in the small kitchen; a white cloth was spread over half the table, and on it were placed a solitary cup and saucer, a large homely cake, butter, a crusty loaf and a pot of strawberry jam. A small black kettle puffed merrily on the hob, and Armadale was in the act of measuring some tea into a brown china teapot.

"Upon my word, you know how to take care of yourself," said Mr. Benson, pausing at the door to survey the cheery scene.

"I ought to; I've knocked about the world a bit. Walk in, vicar, and make yourself at home."

"With all the pleasure possible," said Mr. Benson, subsiding into a wooden armchair.

"Let me recommend the jam; it's a present from the grateful mother of Tommy Jones," said the schoolmaster; "or will you sample the cake? Mrs. Gregg insisted on providing it; she has a great contempt for my housekeeping capacities, I believe."

"Worthy soul! Let us eat to her good health," said the vicar.

"You must know I have come on an important embassy," he continued a few minutes later, when the meal was in merry progress.

"Indeed! From whom?"

"From no less a person than her high mightiness the Lady of the Manor."

"I presume you mean Mrs. Escott, but may I ask why you call her that?"

"Simply because it is the title she herself chooses to adopt," said the vicar, with a slight twinkle in his dark eyes.

"I know she lives at Little Mere Manor House," said Armadale, "but I was under the impression that she had only been there two or three years, and that the place did not belong to her."

"You are quite right, it doesn't. The real owner is in Australia. Old John Escott, the late owner, had two sons, Richard and Rolf. The younger was a fine fellow, but hot-spirited, and the elder brother contrived to make mischief between him and his father. Richard Escott was a sneaking, underhand creature, but his shifty ways did not avail him much, for in the end his father quarrelled with him also. When old John Escott died it was found that he had completely passed over Richard Escott and his family, and left everything to the son of his younger son."

"Rather hard on Richard."

"Well—yes—but he pretty well deserved what he got," said Mr. Benson doubtfully. "He was a downright worthless fellow, and it would have been a bad day for Little Mere if he had ever inherited the property. When he heard the terms of his father's will, he deserted his wife and children, leaving them in great poverty, and went off to Mexico."

"Then how does it happen that they come to be living here?"

"That's the fault of that foolish young Rolf Escott, out in Australia."

Armadale looked puzzled.

"Well, you see, this was the way of it. When this Rolf Escott heard that his uncle had been entirely disinherited, he seems to have thought it a most unfair proceeding, although he knew that Richard had behaved badly. His own father had been dead for several years, and he himself was getting on well in Australia. So the quixotic young fellow wrote home, all in

a hurry, and said he would fix a settled income on Richard Escott's children, and that the Manor House would be placed at their disposal for three years, until he came back to England."

"You seem to think he did foolishly?" said Armadale, as the vicar stirred his fourth cup of tea with a wrinkled frown on his forehead.

"I do, frankly. I think it was a mistake. Mrs. Richard Escott—well, there, I must leave you to find out for yourself what kind of a person that lady is."

"But how can I? What possible connection is there between the Lady of the Manor and the village schoolmaster?" Armadale spoke with more than a touch of bitterness.

"Ah, that is what I am coming to. I am commissioned by Mrs. Escott to ask a favour of you. They are going to have some *tableaux vivants* at the Manor House, and she is most desirous that you will play some accompanying music. Of course I don't imagine for a moment that you will consent, but I could not refuse to bring the message."

To the vicar's surprise the emphatic refusal which he expected from the proud and reserved schoolmaster never came. Instead of dismissing the idea with scorn Armadale seemed actually to be deliberating over it.

"That way will do as well as another," he said half-absently. "Very well, Mr. Benson," he added aloud, "I daresay I shall be able to do what Mrs. Escott wants. I will call to-morrow at the Manor House and arrange particulars."

The vicar took his departure, lost in amazement.

"Well, how deceived one can be in people!" he mused. "If there is a man who detests patronage I should have said it was Armadale; yet he accepted the invitation from that vulgar woman with scarcely a vestige of hesitation. Well, well, I suppose there is a remnant of self-interest left in the best of us; and no doubt Armadale thinks it will in some way be to his advantage to get in with the Manor House folk."

CHAPTER III.

"WELL, if this isn't too provoking!" exclaimed Charlotte Escott.

"What is the matter?"

"Dora Leslie writes to say that she has a bad sore throat, and will be unable to appear to-morrow. Too tiresome of her, at the last moment, when it is impossible to supply her place."

The scene was the long drawing-room at the Manor House, and the last dress-rehearsal for the *tableaux vivants* was in full progress.

Various performers in picturesque costumes were grouped about the platform, which had been erected at one end. Charlotte Escott, her mother and Edwin Mildmay were criticizing the arrangements from the front. In a recess near, the musicians were stationed; a man had been hired to play the piano, and Armadale, violin in hand, was waiting for the signal to begin.

"What will you do?" inquired Mrs. Escott.

"I don't know; we are short of performers as it is," said Charlotte with a frown of vexation. "No one can be spared to take the part of Elaine in this tableau."

"You'll have to leave it out."

"Mother! One of our prettiest pictures! And we've got the barge ready and everything."

The picture was taken from Tennyson's poem "Lancelot and Elaine," and was supposed to represent the scene where the dead Elaine floats in her barge down to Camelot and reaches the palace of the King.

"Well, I don't know what you can do," said Mrs. Escott in a tone absolutely devoid of suggestion.

Charlotte stood silent, twisting the obnoxious little missive that had brought the bad news between her fingers.

Mildmay, who had been attending to some alterations in the draping of the curtains, here put in a word:

"What about Miss Gray?" he said quietly. "Couldn't you inveigle her into the delinquent's part?"

"Miss Gray?" echoed the elder lady frostily.

"Quite impossible," said Charlotte.

"Most unsuitable—a young person in that position." Mrs. Escott took refuge in her favourite formula.

"Oh, well, as you like; only, as Miss Escott remarked, it seems a pity to omit this tableau, for it will be one of the prettiest."

"Yes, with a proper Elaine." Charlotte's tone was significant.

"Pardon me; if you come to personal appearance, in my opinion Miss Gray looks infinitely more suited to the part than Miss Leslie."

Mr. Mildmay was an obstinate young man, with no tact, and not a great amount of wit. He had one abounding merit, however, in the eyes of Mrs. Escott: he was the only son of old Gregory Mildmay, one of the richest mill-owners in Birmingham. She had firmly decided that his visit to Little Mere must not come to an end before he made an offer for the hand of her younger daughter, Evelyn. She had been working to attain this object all along, but of late some strange and horrible misgivings had crossed her mind.

When Mildmay made his last recorded speech, mother and daughter could not refrain from exchanging glances. It was impossible for Armadale, from his post near, not to see and hear everything that passed.

"When you say 'more suited,' I don't know what you mean," said Charlotte, who was as stiff-willed as Mildmay himself. "Miss Gray is quite plain—Dora Leslie is a very handsome woman."

"Miss Leslie may be handsome, but not in the Elaine style. It needs a more refined, ethereal kind of beauty. Miss Leslie is altogether too substantial. Who could ever imagine her pining away and dying for love? Miss Gray, now—she may not be so striking-looking, but to my mind her face is far more beautiful though she looks rather pale and sad."

This from the dense and sleepy-headed Edwin Mildmay!

Lewis Armadale broke into a delicious merry little gurgle of music, a set of Spanish dance measures certainly not set down in the programme. They sounded almost like a laugh of triumphant derision.

"Under any circumstances, it is quite out of the question," said Mrs. Escott sharply.

The young man bowed and moved away.

"There, mother, what did I tell you?" exclaimed Charlotte,

before he was well out of hearing. "Evelyn hasn't a chance. He won't look at her. He's in love—head over ears in love—with Gillian Gray."

"Oh, the wicked, artful girl! How I have been deceived in her!" was Mrs. Escott's somewhat inconsequent rejoinder. "Something must be done at once. They musn't be allowed to meet, or who knows what may happen?"

"What will probably [happen," said Charlotte with a grim smile, "is that he will propose to Miss Gray, and of course she will accept him on the spot."

"Too bad—too bad! After all the trouble I have taken! I did hope to have one of you girls well married before that precious cousin of yours comes back from Australia and turns us out of house and home."

"You haven't heard any news, have you?" said Charlotte, looking startled.

"No, no, but the time is getting on. You know he said 'three years,' and that will soon be up now."

"Oh, well, I expect he is rather a softy," said Charlotte hopefully. "When he does turn up we must try some way of getting round him."

"Yes, indeed. But now, about Miss Gray? She mustn't be allowed to stay in the house another day. You have quite alarmed me with your suggestions."

"Why, mother, what are you going to do?"

"Never mind. Leave it to me, I'll manage it," said Mrs. Escott with an air of mystery, and a moment later she left the drawing-room.

CHAPTER IV.

It was a gusty afternoon in early March. The wind whistled down the leafless avenue at the Manor House and rattled the bare branches overhead. It made spiteful little dabs at Gillian Gray's hat, and flapped her skirts round her legs in an embarrassing fashion as, cumbered with a heavy bag, she struggled in the direction of the lodge gates.

"It's too bad—too bad!" she thought passionately. "Turned out of the house—that's what it practically means—for that flimsy excuse about unexpected guests and my room being wanted would impose on no one. And now I shall have

to go away from Little Mere, and I'll never, never see him again."

Tears rose to her eyes and rolled uncomfortably down her cheeks; they felt moist and chilly, but she scarcely made an effort to restrain them. What did it matter how ugly she looked? There was no one there to see her, no one to care how wretched she felt.

A firm step scrunched on the gravel beside her, a deep-pitched voice sounded cheerily in her ears.

"Going my way, Miss Gray? What an afternoon! Let me carry that for you."

The bag was taken out of her hand with unmistakable decision. She mumbled some greeting and turned aside her face, trusting that the young schoolmaster had not noticed the traces of tears. It was an idle hope, for those penetrating eyes had a knack of allowing few things to escape them, but Armadale stepped along beside his companion with a few indifferent words.

"Did the performance go off well?" said Gillian, striving to speak lightly.

"Excellently, I believe. I was abundantly satisfied," said Armadale with an enigmatic smile unseen by Gillian. "Are you going far?" he inquired, as they left the gates of the Manor House behind them and struck into the main road.

"I am going to Martin's Farm."

"Martin's Farm? You have a long, cold walk before you. It will be late when you get back."

"I am not going back to the Manor House to-night," said Gillian in a low voice.

Then the sudden remembrance of some words he had overheard that afternoon flashed into Armadale's mind. His lips tightened, and there came a light into the dark eyes that boded no good to the Lady of the Manor.

As they reached the School-house Gillian stopped, and held out her hand.

"I'm not going in yet, I'm going on to Martin's Farm," said the schoolmaster, "Mrs. Martin is a particular friend of mine."

Gillian tried to mumble some remonstrance, but her companion paid small attention. The walk over the windy heath

was a somewhat silent one. They reached the farmhouse at last and Mrs. Martin, the apple-cheeked mistress, bustled out to meet them with noisy effusion. Such a short notice—but she had done her best—hoped the young lady would find everything comfortable. And wouldn't Miss Gray like tea at once? It was all ready and waiting. And Mr. Armadale too—dear, dear, it was quite a long time since she had set eyes on *him*—and would they be pleased to walk in? The best parlour was quite ready, and she had lighted a fire there the minute Mrs. Escott's messenger came.

She threw open the door of a small sitting-room; after the chill buffeting of the wind across the heath, it seemed snug and cheery.

“If you will kindly bring another cup and saucer, Mrs. Martin,” said Armadale, surveying the surroundings with unabashed hardihood, “Miss Gray will give me a cup of tea before I go.”

“Ay, sir, and quite right too,” said the old woman, as she bustled away merrily.

Gillian gave him a glance which was meant to convey astonishment at his audacity, but somehow the attempt was a failure. Her pretence of dignity melted into a smile.

“Don't you think I deserve it?” he said, coming a step or two nearer.

“Oh, yes—yes—you deserve it—anything you like,” said Gillian hastily, as she retreated to the other side of the fireplace and began to busy herself over the kettle.

Armadale took her by her two hands, and gently deposited her in a big arm-chair.

“This tea is *my* affair,” he said quietly; “you sit there and rest.”

“Men are so conceited,” said Gillian, “they always think they know better than any one else how to do everything.”

She was fresher now, at the end of her long walk, than she had been at the beginning. The tired feeling at her heart had gone. A pretty little pink flush came into her pale cheeks, and there was quite a merry sparkle in her usually quiet eyes.

“That young fool Mildmay has eyes in his head, bother him!” thought the schoolmaster. “I wonder——” his cogitations took an unpleasant turn.

"What about the *tableaux vivants* to-morrow night, Miss Gray?" he asked presently. "Will you be there to see them?"

"I think—I shall not—go back to the Manor House at all," she said with an effort.

The remembrance of some words spoken by Mrs. Escott rose up in her mind, and her face was scorched with sudden flame.

"You will be glad to leave Little Mere?" said the schoolmaster. "'Tis a stupid little humdrum place. You'll be going, perhaps, to a wider life." His thoughts had flown to the rich mill-owner's son. Doubtless Mrs. Escott had good cause for her suspicions with regard to Mr. Mildmay's preference for the governess rather than for one of her own daughters.

"Glad to leave Little Mere!" echoed Gillian. She gave a dreary little laugh. In proportion as her spirits declined those of the hard-hearted schoolmaster rose.

"Why, you don't mean to say you will be sorry?" he said cheerfully.

No answer.

"What can you find to regret in leaving such a quiet country place as this?" he persisted.

Gillian went down on her knees on the hearthrug.

"How hot the fire is!" she said, and she poked it vigorously in order to make it less hot.

The poker was gently removed from her hands, and placed in the fender.

"If any one asked you, would you be willing to go on living at Little Mere?"

"Perhaps."

"I can't hear what you say—speak louder—turn your face this way."

"Don't order me in that tone—I'm not one of your school-children," muttered Gillian, under her breath.

"I wish you were,—I would soon make you obey me," said Armadale with a vast attempt at fierceness. "Now, listen—tell me—if I asked you to stay at Little Mere would you stay?"

A perverse "No!" hovered on Gillian's lips. She looked up, tried to say it and failed ignominiously.

"What! Marry a village schoolmaster and live in a three-roomed cottage?" said Armadale.

"In a *one*-roomed cottage if necessary—with *you*," came in smothered but unabashed accents, for Gillian's face was safely hidden from public view.

CHAPTER V.

"I CAN'T say I like that schoolmaster," remarked Mrs. Escott. "He certainly has the most ungracious manners of any one I ever met. He seems to have no sort of proper idea of the deference due from one in his position to one in mine."

It was the morning after the *tableaux vivants*. The performance had been a great success.

"He certainly plays well," said Charlotte, indifferently.

"That may be ; but I don't intend to encourage him. I shall pay him this morning for his performance last night, and after that I shall not ask him again to the Manor House. It's taking him quite out of his proper class."

"I'll tell you who likes him," piped Owen : "Miss Gray."

"Go on with your breakfast, Owen, and don't talk nonsense," said Charlotte severely, while Evelyn giggled and glanced at her mother.

"But she does," persisted the boy. "He was so kind that day I fell in the pine-wood and cut my knee. He carried me all the way home. That was the first time we ever saw him."

"By-the-bye, I hope Miss Gray isn't ill," said Mildmay, glancing round the breakfast-table, "I haven't seen her since yesterday morning."

"Miss Gray has gone on a few days' holiday," said Mrs. Escott stiffly.

"And perhaps she isn't coming back any more," officiously volunteered Owen. "Oh, Evelyn, what a kick you gave me!"

There was a somewhat awkward pause. Mrs. Escott took up a letter which had been lying unopened by her plate.

"Will you excuse me?" she said, rising. "I told Mr. Armadale to call this morning at half-past ten, and it is almost that now. Charlotte, I want to speak to you in the library."

"One moment," said Edwin Mildmay, also rising. There was

an unusually determined look on his smooth, florid countenance. "I have paid you an unconscionably long visit, Mrs. Escott, but I mustn't trespass on your kindness any longer. To-morrow I must go back to Birmingham."

"That will be a great loss to us," said Mrs. Escott, striving to smile and speak amiably, but her heart was full of rage and mortification.

"Well, mother, didn't I speak truly?" said Charlotte, as she followed her into the library. "Did you not notice how he looked when Owen spoke of Miss Gray?"

"I could have thrashed them both," cried Mrs. Escott angrily. "But the fault is all hers—a wicked, designing girl. Not another step inside this house does she come! Her box shall be packed and sent to Martin's Farm, and I'll send her a quarter's salary and have done with her."

"The mischief's done; Mr. Mildmay will never look at Evelyn," said Charlotte moodily.

She stood gazing out of the bay window, which commanded a view of the approach to the house. Suddenly she was startled by an exclamation from her mother.

"Great goodness! He's back! He's coming here to-day."

"What? Who?" cried Charlotte. "Rolf Escott! In England?"

"In Little Mere, and coming here to-day," repeated Mrs. Escott in a dull voice.

"Here's that bothering schoolmaster coming up the path," said Charlotte—"and in the name of all that's cool—*Miss Gray!*"

Mrs. Escott's wrath blazed forth, and her native vulgarity lost even its semblance of good breeding.

"Impertinence! I'll make short work of *her*," she exclaimed. "Wilson," she said to the servant who appeared at the library door, "show Mr. Armadale in here, and desire Miss Gray to take a seat in the hall until I can speak to her."

A moment later the schoolmaster entered the library.

"Oh, Mr. Armadale, you've come for your cheque, I presume," said Mrs. Escott with scant civility. "Well, here it is. Now there is one other thing I wish to say."

Mr. Armadale bowed and waited.

"I observed as you came up the avenue that you had with you a young person who was formerly in my employ."

"Well?" The schoolmaster's dark eyes were fixed intently on the face of the enraged lady.

"Merely this—in case of any possible mistake, I wish you clearly to understand that henceforth I have nothing whatever to do with Miss Gray. I have cause for serious displeasure with her, and as I do not consider she is a fit person to have the charge of my child, I have dismissed her from my service."

Armada made one step towards Mrs. Escott; his face was white, his eyes blazing, his tone was cutting in its keen incisiveness.

"What you say is absolutely false. That is not the reason why you have dismissed Miss Gray. You know as well as I do that her character is blameless."

"Insolence! Leave the house this moment," cried Mrs. Escott, starting to her feet. "You entirely forget your position. *You—you*—the village schoolmaster to dare to speak to the Lady of the Manor in that fashion! Why, I could have you turned out of your post to-morrow."

Armada could scarcely forbear smiling at the idle threat.

"Pardon me, Mrs. Richard Escott," he said, quietly; "I am here in another capacity than that of the village schoolmaster."

"Indeed?" said the lady with a sneer. "As a strolling player?"

"No—as Rolf Lewis Armada Escott—owner of the Manor House."

All the colour faded from Mrs. Escott's florid face, leaving a curious streaky pallor. She stared in dumb amazement.

"It was far from my intention to have told you the news in this fashion," said the young man, gently, "but you left me no choice. I settled at Little Mere on purpose to see how far it would be advisable to set aside the terms of my grandfather's will. My experience has been disappointing. I shall be still happy to place at your disposal the income you have received since John Escott's death, but I must request that the Manor House be handed over to me at the end of the next three months, as I intend to live here with my wife."

"Your wife? Are you married, then?"

"Not yet, but I hope to be in the course of the next few weeks."

“And are we to have the pleasure of making the acquaintance of the young lady?” said Mrs. Escott, with a last feeble attempt to keep in with the reigning powers.

“Certainly, if she has no objection,” responded Armadale cheerfully. “The future Lady of the Manor is, I believe, at the present moment sitting on a chair in your hall. Her name is Gillian Gray.”

An Anarchist's Love.

HUMANITY has many varying forms, and the lives of men present to us now a tragedy, now a comedy ; but even in the case of the seemingly prosperous and happy there is often a tragic vein of disappointment and baffled hopes beneath the veneered surface that is turned to the world.

To have lived is, with many, to have been disappointed. Some have not known disappointment or felt the keen edge of regret, because they have never had hopes or experienced happiness. Such a man was Luke Reade. A life without smiles, a soul without happiness, a heart without rest ; these are phrases the meaning of which he knew by experience, but the full meaning of which he had never learnt, for it was unknown to him by contrast.

Five and twenty years ago he had been brought into the world, the fruit of the sin of a man and the weakness of a woman. The sins of the father were visited on the child. He had been clothed, fed and educated, in short, all that we mean by "well cared for ;" but a parent's care, a parent's love had never been his.

As a consequence, he grew up through five and twenty years to be a danger and a curse to the world around him. Nobody had ever loved him. Not unnaturally, he hated mankind. He saw other people smile in happiness as he passed them in the street ; he read in books of such a thing as love, and once he saw a marriage party issuing from a church. It had been a love marriage, and the young bride's face was transfigured with a radiant joy. That expression puzzled him. He wondered how it could be possible, till there dawned on him the possibility of a life other than his own, and with the dawning knowledge came hatred of those who enjoyed that life. Henceforth, to see men smile was to rouse up the demons of hatred and jealousy in his heart. Such was the effect upon him of seeing the common events of the world, as he passed along the avenues of life, a stranger to all.

As we have said, Luke Reade was well educated, and a constant supply of money kept him in the needs of life. Except for the main fact of his birth, and the knowledge that he was not allowed to starve, he knew nothing of his origin. There was one thing in life which took Reade's thoughts from their moody brooding, and that was the study of chemistry. Most of his life was spent over test-tubes and acid bottles. Amongst the strange litter of books he had collected and which, as usual, formed an index to the character of their owner, side by side with the atheistic or revolutionary diatribe, you would find elaborate treatises on chemistry and other kindred sciences. In a laboratory he had constructed, he lived and smoked for hour upon hour, wrapt in the experiments he was for ever conducting, and surrounded by clouds of evil smelling fumes.

Had he not had this one interest in life, he would have developed into an anarchist much sooner. As it was, it was not till he was twenty-five that he became an active member of the London organisation. But when he did gain admission into the confidence of these men, he became an anarchist and more than an anarchist. The pent-up bitterness of years combined with his natural skill and power of character to render his words on the council of the society a thing to be remembered, and such as to earn him instant power in its deliberations.

The members sat round a back room in a house near Oxford Street, and at one end of the table in the centre stood Luke Reade. His tall, gaunt figure was outlined against the light from the window. His shoulders were bent in a slight stoop, and on his pale face, overshadowed by a crop of dishevelled black hair, a premature look of age was put to flight by a keen light of animation. For the first time he was speaking of his wronged, bitter life.

"I stand before you a man, yet not a man. I have brains, power of thought, knowledge," he cried excitedly, "what you will, as other men have, aye, and more than other men. Yet the power to use them is not mine. A bastard floats among the scum ; while those of whose sin he is the fruit sit in kings' palaces, in the sunshine of the world's approval. Do you talk to me of a God? Ah, ah!" and his hoarse, strident laugh sounded through the room as the laugh of a raven. "The good God! the *good* God! No, my brothers. It is to us that it is given to reform

the world. And how shall we reform?" he continued with insinuation in his tone. "Think you we can mend? No, we must upheave; in one great upheaval we shall find the millennium." A smile crept across his features; throwing back his head, he drew up his figure to its full height. "Therefore it is that we cry, *Vive l'Anarchie!*"

The power of his oratory communicated itself to his hearers, and, as his voice died amid murmurs of approval, the scene in that room was one of unequalled horror. The dying twilight of a summer's night lit up faces disfigured by every passion that human nature is heir to and that Reade's words had stirred up. Lust, avarice, revenge, what a millenium there would be for vice in the world's anarchy! *Vive l'Anarchie!* Long may it reign. They separated ere long to brood over their hellish thoughts. As Luke Reade walked through the squares and streets of Bloomsbury, he felt cheered with the thought that at last he had unburdened his soul, and had now the prospect of taking part in the destruction of the society of which he was a product; for to an anarchist, anarchy is an event of to-morrow—though as yet it has not come.

One hot night, some days after, Luke Reade, finding the atmosphere of his laboratory too oppressive, left his rooms to seek a cooler air. With his pipe between his teeth, and his hands in his pockets, he strolled along the quiet streets of Bloomsbury, round the squares where the trees were blackened and scorched by the dusty, stifling warmth of a London August. The heat of the day had rendered refreshing the cooler breezes of evening, which rustled among the dried leaves of the trees, scattering some of them among the dust that gathered in the corners of the roadway. There came the sound, as from a distance, of the rumbling of the 'buses along the Euston Road. People sat with windows wide open, and the sound of laughter was occasionally carried out to Reade as he passed along by the area railings. For the first time in his life he began to long for a companion.

While passing along the side of one of the more secluded squares, he noticed the form of a girl coming slowly round the corner. She walked with a tired, languid step. A shabby straw hat, which had once been pretty, was pinned carelessly on her tumbled brown hair. The light from a gas-lamp showed him her

face, which was not without its beauty. Without colour, yet well formed, it was pathetic, with its expression of tiredness as of one who had learnt what life was, and the living of it. She looked up as she heard Reade's step approaching, and as she passed him a sudden impulse caused him to accost her. She smiled. It was a smile of invitation—a set smile without joy, rather the repetition of a smile smiled often before than the outcome of any pleasure. Well, it was a diversion to be talked to, though she half hesitated as she noticed the wistful longing look in the eyes that were turned inquiringly upon her. Luke Reade turned and walked by her side, and so they passed round the square. After a time, they crossed over to the path surrounding the square garden, and leant against the railing under the trees. Luke Reade had found a companion.

When he returned to his rooms that night he found that a man had called for him while he was out. Next evening the man called again. He was the head of the London anarchists, and the object of his visit was, to say that help was needed in the carrying out of a plot, long planned, and for which the time was now ripe. "You," he said, leaning forward in his chair and addressing Reade, who leaned against the window frame, "are skilled in chemistry, so I have been informed, and your books here lend confirmation. We recognize in you a true compatriot, and it has been decided to intrust to you the making of a bomb. It is only the means to an end," he added, as he noticed his hearer hesitated. "Do you shrink?" This with a shade of intonation which was quite sufficient to fire his companion. "Shrink," he cried, "do I shrink? Does a perjured woman seek to avenge her wrong? Does the worm turn beneath the heel that crushes it? Aye, assuredly it does, and so do I," he added, in a low intense voice. "I rejoice in this opportunity. I see now that it is this for which I was born into the world, and have waited long."

"That is well," added the quieter tones of the other, and then the details were arranged that there might not be a hitch.

Reade's chemical studies had now a definite purpose, and all the skill of accumulated years of labour and the natural cunning of his brain were turned upon the manufacture of the bomb.

His days were passed in the consideration of its details, in the endeavour, amongst other things, to compress the maximum of

deadliness into the minimum of space. And his efforts were crowned with a success which made his step light as he went out in the dusk of the evening to meet the girl whose acquaintance he had made.

At first he treated her casually, greeting her with the flippant kiss that such girls are accustomed to receive, and leaving her thus or with a more off-hand "Good-night, dear." As the nights passed, however, he felt more and more drawn to this girl, whom he called Nancy. He learnt that she too had come into the world, unwelcome, and like him was without parents, more or less without friends. Her days were passed in the toil of a great warehouse, and to her, who perchance had inherited a certain refinement and culture, this monotonous toil was loathesome.

These two were drifting in the scum of society, in the ebb-tide. It was not surprising that before long they drifted together. In both there was a passionate craving for sympathy, for love, and in the man's heart there was desire.

In a few weeks their lives were no longer companionless, for they were united in a wild, unhallowed love. And, meanwhile, the bomb had been completed, but the fact of its manufacture was kept secret from the girl, and Luke Reade, looking on his work, felt that it was very good.

The afternoon of a day in late September was drawing to a close, when Luke Reade sat down to rest after the fatigues and anxieties of the day. Every arrangement for the exploding of the bomb had been made, each detail of the plan settled, and there now remained a few hours for reflection before he brought to a conclusion the hellish preparations of the past months with the horrible massacre which the success of his arrangements led him to anticipate.

It had been decided to explode the bomb amongst a brilliant first-night audience as it issued from the theatre, and the details had been left entirely in Reade's hands. The man was racked now with conflicting feelings ; at one moment he was beside himself with joy, gloating over the destruction he would consummate, another he would be choking down misgivings and relentings in his heart, for the love of Nancy was making him gradually more human.

Still, the bitterness of his heart was untouched, and the sight of the bomb left him without a doubt or misgiving. He loved

it as a thing he had called into being. He spent hours fondling it, admiring the perfectness of its structure.

He had obtained a room in the Strand from which he could see the explosion and the destruction that the cunning of his hands would consummate, and in that room he sat now with every arrangement made and a few hours to wait. He held the bomb in his hands. The touch of it thrilled him, and he remembered that the audience amongst which it would carry death, would now be discussing, in their stalls and boxes, the first act of the great social satire which was awaiting their judgment and that of the critics.

Luke Reade had placed the bomb at the entrance of the theatre with a time-fuse attached, and, as he told himself, the only detail of the plan which might have resulted in detection was successfully accomplished. He stood in the window of his room, out of range of destruction, but in a position to see all, and a wild, unholy fever of joy was upon him. The first carriages were being called, and one or two men stood in the theatre vestibule. Presently, women in light opera cloaks and men in evening dress formed quite a crowd, a cynical, frothy crowd of men and women discussing the latest problem play, in the empty society twaddle of the hour. To none of them came the thought that many of them would in a few short moments solve the greatest problem of human nature—the mystery of the future after death. To Reade, as he watched them, they were lambs ready for the slaughter. Yet as he saw that young girl, her pure fresh beauty heightened by the joy of her first season, and reflected that she would be one of the victims, his heart smote him—yet better to die thus now than to grow up to be like the older women around her.

When, however, he looked on the crowd, his heart hardened. Why did he pity them? That old man, disgracing his age with the *blasé*, cynical smile that overspread his features, what pity did he deserve? Perhaps it was he, that very man, who had called into being the watcher in the window. Would to God that it might be! And thus the whole bitter misery of his birth and life welled up in Reade's mind and steeled his heart. He stood there, wildly triumphant in the thought of his vengeance, which was now passing sweet. He looked at his watch. A minute more, and it would be accomplished. That crowd as it loitered by carriage doors, in a minute, what would it be?

Vive l'Anarchie !

Suddenly his face blanched, his hand clenched. There was no doubt about it. There, in the midst of the crowd, pushing her way towards him, was Nancy, his love, his life! Good God! what did she there? She was doomed. It was impossible to escape, jammed in the crush. In that moment Reade suffered the torments of hell.

A fearful explosion rent the air, and, as its echoes died away, there arose a long, low wail of human misery. But Reade hardly heard. He noticed not the writhing heaps of tortured men and women, he marked not the wreck of the theatre front, nor the struggling, kicking horses. But his eyes seemed to penetrate the haze of smoke and dust, and he saw but one form, that of Nancy, as she lay prostrate among the dead and dying.

She moved, thank God she moved! With difficulty, in mortal anguish, she turned till she could look up at the lodging window. Her eyes met her lover's, and a smile passed over her tortured face—that look was her last farewell. With an effort she raised her hand to her lips to throw a kiss in the light, joyous way she had done when she left him last. Then life flitted, and Reade knew that he had destroyed the one life that was anything to him in the world.

The morning sun shone down on London. It shone in on the worker bidding him rise to his toil, and it shone through the window of a room in the Strand on the huddled figure of a man sleeping in an arm-chair. In his hand was a bomb, his other hand was clenched; and on his exhausted, wan face was a look of horror as the reflection of a dream. The sun rays touched his eyelids, and he awoke to consciousness with a look of apathy, as of one for whom life contained nothing.

Feeling something in his hand—his eyes fell in that direction, and he started. He rose, with his hand pressed to his forehead. Did he dream? Great God! Was it possible that the bomb had not been exploded? He rushed to the window and looked out, feverishly, excitedly, as a madman looks. Was it a scene of destruction that met his eye? No; only the Strand, peaceful as it is in very early morning. A dazed feeling came upon him, and he turned still in doubt. As he did so, the door of the room opened, and he knew he had dreamed—for there before him

stood Nancy, the old joyous Nancy, with the lingering look of tiredness dying from her face; the Nancy whom he loved with a love which now would never die. So it had been a dream.

Well, for him it had been very, very real; and now the joy was too good almost to be borne. It vented itself in a wild, hysterical fit of laughter, ringing through the silent house, peal after peal, and as it died so did the man's former life. The dream, divinely sent to save the lives of those who now were asleep all unknowing of the fearful death they had so narrowly escaped, had in its hideous realism touched the heart of Luke Reade and stirred the goodness which lay hidden as nothing else would have done. It turned the whole tenour of his life. Henceforth, he lived the life of a changed man, learning the sweetness of life in the embraces of a wife, and forgetting its bitterness in the joy of a father.

E. CECIL WILLIAMS.

Monarchs who have met Me.

By JAMES PLATT, JUNIOR.

NO. I.—THE LITTLE KING OF SPAIN.

CHOLERA year does not seem at first sight the most appropriate time for a visit to Spain, and yet it was the one chosen by myself and friend for the trip I am about to describe. We were under no constraint. Love of the bizarre and of all that had an odour of adventure was our sole motive. We wanted to experience for ourselves the joys of fumigation and police surveillance, or, better still, to elude them and smuggle ourselves across the frontier in defiance of doctors. And, as I shall presently show, we actually did succeed in evading quarantine. This was on our return. Of course getting into Spain was easy enough. It was the getting out of it into France that required the exercise of our trained powers of dissimulation.

Our first step starting from London was to pass through Paris to Hendaye, which as every school boy knows is the last town in France. Here again our originality showed itself. The cut-and-dried tourist enters Guipuzcoa by train. We had decided to do so on foot. The frontier is formed by the river Bidassoa, winding far inland. From Hendaye to Irun, the first Spanish town, the river is crossed by a splendid railway bridge. This is the means by which thousands of travellers enter the land of Don Quixote yearly, but for that reason it was disdained by us. Foot passengers are debarred from it, but lower down the stream, at the next village (Behobie), there is a bridge that was used in the old coaching days, and we had determined to walk out to that. But first of all we spent a day or two in the picturesque village of Hendaye itself. We attended a funeral in the quaint old church, where the sexes are kept divided in Oriental fashion. We watched the country carts with their wheels all of one piece and their yokes of placid oxen, and their picturesque Basque teamsters with their goads and their picturesque Basque profanity. The dress of the natives is something like the lowland

Scotch, only more so. There is a plaid, or what looks very much like one, and there is the *béret* (so called in French, *boina* in Spanish, *chapela* in Basque), which is practically the Scotch bonnet, only still cannier, in so far as its colour indicates the politics of its wearer. This is an unsophisticated land, where a man does not hesitate to wear outside his head what in less favoured regions it is far too often advisable to keep inside ! But indeed everything is different from what we have left at home ; even the names are such as we have hitherto never met with outside the transpontine drama. Venancio Cendoya is the name of our landlord. One looks under the bed for concealed trap doors when sleeping under a roof which has such a name painted on it as that. But to do him justice, he is as honest a fellow as ever told a lie in the way of business.

The next day, after a pleasant early morning stroll from Hendaye to Behobie, we stood face to face with the foot-bridge, which bears on the hither side the insignia of France and over yonder the quarterings of Castille and Leon. Our first step in order to assimilate ourselves as much as possible to the ways of the country was to purchase of the village shoemaker the native rope-soled shoes (French, *espadrilles*; Spanish, *alpargatas*; Basque, *espartiñac*). Having put these on in place of our own, we could cross the bridge and accost the Custom House officer as if to the manner born. We passed his scrutiny. As I have said before, our getting *into* Spain was easy enough. We had yet to get out of it, but that did not trouble our youthful and elastic consciences. Not much.

We walked to Irun, which is the frontier town of Spain, and through its ancient streets, until we came to a shop where Spanish playing cards were exposed for sale. These were so different from our own with their suits of coins, cups and swords that we could not resist the temptation of purchasing several packs. We found the shopkeeper and his wife a most interesting old couple, who counted the cards over rapidly in Basque before selling them, to make sure of their being perfect. Their boy came up to inspect the foreigners, and knowing that tennis (*pelota*) plays the part with the Basque youth that cricket or football does with us, I interrogated him on the subject, and found him an enthusiast. He brought out and showed us the curious concave basket which is worn on the right hand in play-

ing to strike the ball with, and known in Spanish as *cesta*. Later on at a well-known place called Jai Alai we saw several of the tennis courts (*frontones*). The game is so popular that emigrants are said to have come back all the way from America to view a famous match. It is so popular that on all the places of worship appears an inscription warning the Basques that tennis is not allowed to be played against church walls.

We might have gone direct from Irun to Saint Sebastian, which was our goal, only we preferred to stroll out first as far as Fuenterrabia, and therefore proceeded to the railway station to deposit our baggage in the cloak room, but to our amazement found there was none. It seems incredible, but there was no cloak room at this frontier station on one of the two great roads that lead from Europe into that Africa which begins at the Pyrenees! An honest-looking hanger-on offered to take charge of our things until we returned, and though we could get no receipt from him and he wore no uniform, we trusted him, and the event proved us right. The walk to Fuenterrabia (past a place bearing the euphonious name of Zuloaga Aundi) was very enjoyable, and we spent some time watching an artist at work in the open air, painting one of the romantic approaches to the grand old town. When we returned we got our luggage without difficulty, and proceeded to the end of our journey. Saint Sebastian is undoubtedly a most attractive watering place, and another reason for bestowing upon it our patronage was that at that moment it was also visited by the boy king and his mother. What was good enough for Alfonsito was good enough for us.

Next morning we passed in review the whole row of bathing-machines on the beach, and, disdaining any of them, pushed on to one much superior to the rest and occupying a position a little removed from the last of the common herd. We were about to take possession of this, as by right of English birth, when a sailor came rushing up to us, with an expression of horror, and hastily explained that this machine, which we had been about to invade, was none other than the pavilion reserved for the king! We beat a confused retreat, of course, but decided that if we could not occupy the machine of the boy-monarch, we would, at any rate, get as near him as possible. We therefore pitched upon the last of the row, and insisted upon having the same one every morning; and, as my friend chose his time for

bathing so as to fit in with that of the royal party, he has since been wont to boast that, for one happy season of his life, he took his daily plunge along with no less a playmate than the King of Spain himself. After the performance was over, we rushed up to the shore, and joined the crowd that always waited to see his Majesty escorted back to his royal carriage. There was a French governess in attendance on him, and every morning, as the signal was given to drive off, she repeated to the child the same phrase, in French, "*Dites adieu,*" and he would then, very prettily, take off his sailor-hat, as an acknowledgment of the loyalty of the bystanders. It was a charming scene. His sisters, the Infantas, also received much attention. They could daily be seen playing with their little brother on the sands, just as English children play at home. I doubt if the king will ever be happier than that August he spent at Saint Sebastian, in the company of myself and friend. It is a detail, but the bathing-machines all bore the name of Andonegui; and, as a philologist, I, of course, lost no time in asking the attendant how to pronounce it. To my great interest and amusement, he first, unthinkingly, brought it out in true Basque fashion—Andonégui, with accent on the penult; and then, remembering himself, corrected it to Andónegui, with the antepenultimate stress, admired at Madrid, and which, although really incorrect, he doubtless imagined to be much more aristocratic. Thus the world wags.

There are many little excursions to be made from Saint Sebastian, independent of the interest the place has for Englishmen, from its relics of the Peninsular War. Tramways run to the quaint, land-locked bay of Pasages, which is well worth a visit, and thence as far as Renteria. But the great excitement of our trip was that most Spanish of all the things of Spain—the bull-fight, which nobody can understand without seeing it. I have seen bull-fights at the capital, and also at Barcelona, as well as at Saint Sebastian, but I never saw so greatly moved an audience as this one, when they fancied the president was cutting unduly short the supply of horses. It was, I think, the only time in my life that I recognized the real power stored up in an angry crowd. Such a demonstration could not be ignored; and after the noisiest few moments I ever spent, the coveted additional knackers were brought into the arena to be butchered, to make a Roman holiday.

It was the bull-fight that made it possible for us to elude the doctors. Special excursions being run from Bordeaux and back, directly after the fight, it was announced, to tempt passengers, that quarantine regulations would be relaxed, and that all travelling by the excursion train would be subject to only a nominal investigation. Needless to say, we jumped at the chance. Our bill at the hotel paid, we went there only to claim our effects, directly the fight was over, and then helter-skelter to the railway, just in time to catch the train, and the thing was done. We were subjected to no annoyance at Hendaye, beyond having to leave our names and addresses; and thus, pitying the luckless fumigated ones, we passed jauntily and easily back into France, out of the land of Spain.

NO. II.—THE MAD KING OF BAVARIA.

THERE are probably few tourists who can make it their boast that they have ridden from the confines of the sea into the kingdom of Bavaria, in company with no less exalted a person than King Ludwig himself. The following adventure gives me, I think, a just claim to sit in the back row of those who have travelled by train, whether first, second, third, or fourth class, with royalty. I do not care to fix the exact year, further than by stating that, as it was in mid-winter, it naturally turned out to be, by a species of doubtful luck with which I am afflicted, as terrible a season as the continent of Europe experienced for many years before or after. Everybody has at hand some one friend, whose memory is equal to the task of recalling the exact weather experienced at any date you may name during the whole period of his existence, and even earlier. With the help of such a professor of mnemonics, the date of my trip, if it is thought worth while to fix it, can readily be fixed.

We had proceeded some distance on our journey before I began to leave the superior attractions of the landscape, and, for a change, took stock of my two fellow-travellers. I started as I identified, in one of them (an obvious German), the features well known to me through photographs, of the monarch of all the Bavarias (I do not know if there is more than one, but this style is often affected by the royal scramblers after titles). I glanced at the other occupant of the carriage, but he was only an American, a mere Republican, yet he also had evidently

noticed the distinguished company he was in, and was visibly impressed. I presently summoned up courage to address him, under cover of a map which I possessed, and which he borrowed of me, and we were soon in whispered conversation about the king, for such we both decided he must be. It was not till we were getting near Cologne, that we mustered sufficient boldness to accost him. I spoke German like a native (a native of London), and my American could also make himself understood, even if it was only by the medium of an oath. We employed a judicious mixture, consisting of two titles to every ordinary word of our little opening speech, and, to our delight, the majesty of Bavaria unbent a little, and condescended to reply to our halting remarks. By the time we reached the well-known station conversation was in full flow, and we readily persuaded the king to accompany us to the Rheinischer Hof to dine, while waiting for the next train that was to carry us further on.

After a nice little dinner, we went to the cathedral, and a command from our Royal companion, not to speak of a further argument of a pecuniary nature, caused the crowns of the famous Three Kings of Cologne to be brought out for our inspection. Our Ludwig handled them with the air of a connoisseur—with the air of one who carries a crown of his own in his portmanteau—while I and the benighted Republican preserved a respectful distance, as of those to whom a crown represented in daily life nothing more dignified than a five-shilling piece. Ultimately we boarded our train, and were conveyed once more on wings of steam towards our destination. The king was now on easy terms with us, and although we still spoke to him as “*Majestät*,” we did not hesitate to compare the administration of Bavaria with that of the Great Republic and of England. We advocated many reforms, some of which, I am proud to say, have since been adopted by the Bavarians. We reached Würzburg, and then the stars in their courses began to work out that ill-luck I have alluded to above. The train was stopped. Snow had been falling to such an extent that the road to Nuremberg was blocked up.

This was an adventure which I had not bargained for with Messrs. Cook and Son, although I am never without an element of enjoyment in anything which suggests a spice of danger. Excited passengers rushed up and down the platform, expostulating with excited officials. At last by, as I firmly believe, the

special intercessions of our late august travelling companion, I was informed that I could be conveyed to Nuremberg without extra charge by another, and much longer route, *via* Bamberg, which had been ascertained to be reasonably clear of snow. I took leave of my American, and of my monarchical principles, and effected the rest of my journey alone. I do not wish to dwell at length on the quaint old Franconian city of Nuremberg as it appeared to me that terrible winter, with all intercommunication done by means of sledges, every other kind of vehicle being impracticable; with the streets lined with fir trees and Christmas toys; and with my favourite fountain boarded up, the lovely Tugendbrunnen, where jets of water stream in more propitious weather from the naked breasts of classic figures. Not intending to copy pages out of guide books, but rather to supply strange matter of my own, I would sooner devote my remaining space to an account of the accidents which befell me at Cologne upon my return journey.

I stepped off the train in that ancient city in the small hours of the morning. So small were they, that while I did not wish to waste my time at an hotel, as adventures can seldom be expected in a bedroom, on the other hand no coffee house was open. I cross-examined a policeman on this point, and at last, with some hesitation, he suggested that the only place which would be likely to open in time for me to have breakfast before I caught my next train would be a thieves' tavern. This was just what I wanted—local colour with a vengeance. As a slummer of some celebrity, I could not lose the opportunity. At some expenditure of my persuasive powers, I succeeded in obtaining the address, my policeman compounding with his conscience for sending me to the lowest quarter of the town, by recommending me to mention my destination to the policeman on the beat nearest to the house in question, before I took the fatal step of going in. I left him, and made my way towards the river. In Cologne this is an easy matter, as all the streets leading river-wards have their names painted in a different colour to those which run parallel with the Rhine. But it was not a very safe proceeding, as the arches I passed under were notoriously the haunts of the vilest of the vile. When at length I emerged upon the quays, I had not far picked my way among bales and barrels before I was challenged by a night watchman, armed with a loaded gun. It never rains

but it pours, they say, and here was adventure crowding the heels of adventure. But that was just what I wanted. In reply to the challenge of my sentinel, I soon succeeded in convincing him that I was a perfectly harmless, if eccentric, pedestrian. He expressed his surprise when I told him I was bound for the thieves' *café*.

"And did you really pass unscathed through those arches?" he asked, pointing in the direction from which I had come. I admitted the soft impeachment.

"Well," said he, "it's a mercy you didn't get your throat cut." He then suggested that, to avoid further danger, as the *café* was most certainly not yet open, I should share his watch for a while. I think I have made it clear to the reader of these lines that I was the sort of traveller to accept such an offer with enthusiasm. We forthwith proceeded to make a night of it. We were soon on roaring terms. For some mysterious reason or other, he mistook me for a Frenchman, which was no compliment, I am sure; yet, as it appeared he had a predilection for the inhabitants of the neighbouring village of Paris, to which locality he assigned me, I did not raise any objection. I have been taken, at different times of my life, for various out-of-the-way nationalities. I have played the part of Basque and Dane, Bohemian and Hungarian; talked Romany with the Gipsy King in Granada, and helped to make up a "minyan" in the Jewish synagogue at Prague; but my rule has always been to let people call me what they like. In my Anglo-Hanoverian, I exchanged ideas with the unmistakable Rhenish of my new acquaintance, and, after discussing all the scandal of Cologne, we found out a mutual taste for music, and as I was well provided with a stock of *Volkslieder*, we were soon singing against one another with might and main. I fancy this may have had something to do with the fact that no tramps of any kind penetrated the neighbourhood of our sentry box that night by the Rhine. I have always understood from my friends that my voice was one of those which can be best appreciated at a distance. After exhausting our respective repertoires, as it was now dawn, I bid farewell to my friend, who gives me renewed directions as to how to reach my thieves' coffee house, and many cautions as to my behaviour inside it. I continue my wild career through back streets, unmistakably redolent of the famous "odour" Cologne, and ultimately reach my destination. We are

provided, I and my fellow scoundrels, with a substantial, if simple, meal, at the very lowest price. My manners must have been perfect, as no objection was taken to them whatever, and I left the *café* without hurt, and got back to the railway station in safety. Thus ended one of the most interesting experiences I ever had. "But your companion of the railway train," I hear some inquisitive person asking, probably a member of the fairer sex, "was he really the King of Bavaria?"

My dear miss, or madame, as the case may be, I really do not know. All I can say is, and I say it upon oath, that if he was not the king, it was a most remarkable case of likeness. It was either Ludwig or his "double."

Fools Together !

NO, I'm not much of a hand at telling a story, never was ; besides, I don't know really whether I ought to tell this one to anybody ; but as you say that Algy Knowles was some sort of relation to you, I suppose that there can be no harm in telling you what I knew of him while we had rooms together. It is quite a sacred matter to me, and I wouldn't tell anybody just to gratify their idle curiosity, so here goes. Some of it I tell you from memory, other parts I take from my diary, which, being a practical man, I keep.

A few years ago I had just returned from abroad, after wandering about over the best part of the globe. I had arrived in London, and made up my mind to settle down to business, as my income was small and would bear supplementing. After a great deal of bother I secured a fairly decent berth in the City, where my knowledge of foreign languages was valuable, and soon settled down to the hum-drum, monotonous City life.

Strolling home one day up Oxford Street, who should I come across but my old schoolfellow, Algy Knowles. He was years younger than myself, but we had been great chums at school, which was all the more remarkable as we were of such opposite temperaments.

I am nothing if not practical, a good friend and a bad enemy, and always speak my mind, though, when I say this, don't think for one moment that I am one of those fellows who are always blurting out awkward things at awkward times. What I mean is that if I think a man is getting at me, I tell him so straight out. If I see one taking a mean advantage of me, I don't waste any time in palaver, but land out and hit him straight between the two eyes. Life's too short to waste time over diplomacy and fencing.

Well, to get back to my story. As I said before, I am not much of a story-teller, but you must be patient with me, and we shall get to the end of it yet.

Algy Knowles was a dreamy sort of fellow, pale, interesting, with clear-cut features and a far-away look in his eyes. Sort of chap ladies rave about and want to be motherly to. What used to annoy me about Algy was that he was so beastly unpractical. Let him but get into one of his dreamy moods and you might yarn away to him till midnight for all the reply you'd get. He'd forget his dinner, or let the fire go out while he was composing one of his beastly fugues or whatever you like to call them. Well, the upshot of our meeting was that we agreed to dig together.

He was on the outlook for diggings and so was I. I was a fairly quiet sort of fellow, and I could answer for him, poor chap. Great pity he wasn't a bit more rowdy.

It was necessary for us both to share digs with some one or other, as we were rather deficient in this world's goods.

We secured very good rooms, three in all, two bedrooms and a joint sitting-room.

One of the bedrooms overlooked a church, and that room I strongly objected to, not because I am averse to churches in general, but because the sight of one always makes me feel melancholy. On the other hand, Knowles was only too delighted at the thought of having a room overlooking a church. He said it would help him compose, to see it all lit up of an evening, and the sounds of the sacred music would while away many a dull hour. How he managed to scrape together the money to pay for his board and lodging I don't know. He had a fairly good tenor voice, and used to get an engagement at a concert now and again; then on Sunday nights he would tramp over to nearly the outer side of London to sing in some choral society, from which he would draw a small salary. On week days he would scribble away for some musical magazine or other, and when he wasn't scribbling or composing, he was either gazing into vacancy or banging away at our poor little piano. I was told that he played remarkably well, but I am no judge, and never could distinguish between a music-hall tune and a sacred cantata. Music is all very well in its way, but I maintain that it is no good to a practical man.

You mustn't think for one moment, from what I've said, that poor Algy was an unpleasant fellow to live with. On the contrary, he was one of the most unselfish, obliging little fellows

you could come across with in a day's march, and when he wasn't in one of his dreamy moods, he really was a most attentive little chap. It was as good as having a valet. He would keep an eye on my clothes. I am a careless sort of fellow, and chuck them about anywhere, and never fold them up by any chance. Well, he would see that they were all put away carefully, cut my papers for me, and pay a hundred and one little attentions, which, as a rule, you only look for from a woman.

One evening, he was sitting in his room, dreaming as usual, with his eyes fixed on the church opposite, when I went up to him quietly, smacking him on the back (I verily believe I frightened him out of twenty years' growth), and said, "Algy, my boy, care to come to a dance with me to-night?" Turning round quickly, his face animated with an eager expression, he replied, "Oh, Braithwaite, I should like it above all things. I've been to nothing of the sort since poor father died, and it's years ago, and I must almost have forgotten the art of dancing, but I should love to go to one again."

"All right, old chap," said I, "look alive, and get into your dress suit; and while I think of it, just look here, my boy, you will see to-night and I shall introduce you to a lot of pretty girls. You're just the sort of fellow they will make a lot of; there's no accounting for the caprices of the fair sex. I don't mean that you are a good-looking fellow, because you're not; but you are interesting, which is a devilish sight more dangerous. Now, look here, just clearly understand me: these girls are all very much above you in social position. You mustn't be offended at what I say, but prevention is better than cure, and if I warn you beforehand, you are not so likely to get your head turned if they take a little notice of you. I know very well what it is, because I have gone through it all myself. Just let a girl say a few soft words, nicely chosen, and you're all ablaze. You must learn to manipulate matters better, and be like the safety-match box, and let her strike her match on your tinder, in other words, your heart, and in so doing, you will find that, like the match, she will set herself alight and leave the tinder cool, then you can watch her till she has burnt herself out, and then go after fresh game. A cruel doctrine, you say? well, so it may be, but it's practical, especially when you've got a limited income. Oh, believe me, there's nothing like a fickle mind to keep a man

single. What are you staring at? why the dickens don't you get your clothes on? think I'm going to wait here all night?"

* * * * *

"Well, Algy, how did you enjoy yourself? Come back heart-whole, eh, my boy?"

"It was splendid, Braithwaite, and I enjoyed myself immensely, and if I wanted to fall in love indeed, I should have my work cut out to know which lady to commence with, as they were all so charming. The dancing has put new life into me, and I feel in such jolly good spirits to-day."

"Well, my boy, as far as new life goes I feel jolly tired, have got a beastly headache, and am only too glad that to-day is Sunday. I shall just loll about and smoke all day, and if you will allow me, since you have never asked me, I will come and listen to this oratorio, or whatever you call it, at the Empress Hall to-night. I daresay that I can manage to sleep as comfortably there in one of the sofa stalls as at home, and it will no doubt give you confidence when you are singing that solo of yours to have me close by."

"Oh, yes, do come," said Algy. "I am so glad. Didn't like to ask you; thought you would be bored. It will indeed lend me confidence to see you there, even if you are snoring, as I have a difficult solo to sing and am very nervous about it."

"Alright, Algy; for goodness' sake let's get some breakfast down. I declare you are turning me into a regular old washer-woman. My jaws will be too tired to eat in a minute. and the breakfast will be charged for all the same."

* * * * *

The vast hall was rapidly filling up, and as I lazily lounged back in my seat, surveying the incomers with a contemptuous stare, I couldn't repress a smile at the thoughts of practical John Braithwaite attending an oratorio.

"By Jingo! I'm hanged if that isn't Miss Eversleigh taking her seat over there. What on earth brings her here? Thought this was a place merely for the people; and, by all that's wonderful, she has got her cousin, the Hon. Frank Markham, with her. Well, wonders will never cease. Shouldn't be surprised to see the Queen and the Royal family arrive after this. If those

fellows don't shut up scraping away at their beastly fiddles, I'm hanged if I don't clear out. Oh, here come all the performers ; it begins to look like business now. Dear me, what a rapt expression that young fool has got on his face—up in the clouds, I can see ; forgotten my existence—such is gratitude.

"Here, boy, give me a programme. Wonder what this piece is called ? Handel's 'Messiah.' H'm ! never heard of it.

"'Comfort ye my People, Mr. Algernon Knowles,' sounds very grand, but when poor little Algy steps forward I am afraid that he will give rather a vague idea of comfort generally. Am quite sure that I shall want a drop of comfort, and fairly strong too, after this performance.

"Hullo ! here we are, the organ's striking up. H'm ! pretty little air. Why, Algy could have done without my presence to-night, after all, I believe ; he looks quite perky and confident, but I do wish he would drop that saintly expression, it does annoy me.

"'Pon my word, the boy's singing very nicely. He will make a name for himself yet. Bravo !—here, what am I saying ; I'm not in a music hall—at any rate, I can clap. He seems to have upset some of the ladies ; there are a good many piping their eyes, and I feel a bit queer myself. What, making a fool of myself in my old age ! This comes of attending oratorios ; never again. Oh, to get up and shout out 'The rowdy, dowdy boys.' This music is all very well in its way but you can have enough of it."

I remembered no more of that vast concourse of voices or the fiddles' plaintive squeal, for sweet slumber came and took complete possession.

* * * * *

Weeks and months flew by, Christmas was past and over and the new year close upon us. Dances and gaieties of every sort were plentiful and invitations were showered in upon us. Algy had made quite a name for himself and was now earning a very fair income. I often used to chaff him and say that he would soon fly away to more aristocratic quarters, but he would look at me in that earnest way of his and say that he would stop in an attic with me. "Yes," replied I, "until Mrs. Right comes along, and then, hey presto! the scene changes : John Braithwaite eats his

crust of bread in solitude. Declare if I won't marry the old dragon downstairs, Mrs. Jones, if you run away, Algy ; she might let me have the rooms cheaper, and then she would have no object in stealing the victuals. By the way, going to the Markhams's dance to-night ? ”

“ Oh, I think so,” replied Algy.

“ Then we may as well go together,” said I. “ How long will you be ? ”

“ About half-an-hour.”

“ Right you are, old chap. Look alive.”

The ball was at its height, every one looked gay and happy, the floor was splendid and the supper perfection.

The bright colours of the ladies' dresses as they flitted gracefully here and there, side by side with the sober black and white of the men's, made up a pretty picture. This bright sight, with the addition of some rattling good champagne and the plaintive strains of the valse would have made me quite sentimental, were I not very angry, for my partner to whom I was engaged for this jolly dance coolly allowed herself to be led off by some cad to the supper room. “ Like his impudence,” said I, “ and it's all the more aggravating because I cannot relieve myself in the same way, having just had my supper. Whew ! how beastly hot it is ! I will just go and have a turn in the conservatory ; though those huge palms are more suggestive of flirting arrangements than cooling purposes.”

“ I know, I know and believe, and reciprocate all you say ; but what is to be done ? What is to be done ? ”

By Jingo, here am I let in for a love-maker's scene, and, what's more, I can't escape without revealing myself. Who's the fair one ?—why, it's Violet Eversleigh, and heavens above ! there's Algy making love to her. Here's a pretty kettle of fish. Well, I don't like playing the part of eavesdropper, but there seems to be no help for it.

She continued, “ I love, you, dear with a far greater love than you can conceive, but I am hedged in on every side with almost insurmountable difficulties. First and foremost there is the fact of my engagement with Frank Markham. 'Twas none of my making ; the match was made up by my father and his mother before I was out of my short frocks. My father is a proud, ambitious man, and would look down upon you and such

professions as yours, though I venerate and admire them. I ask you, Algy, what is to be done?"

All this was getting very interesting to me, and put me in mind of the end of the second volume of the condensed three-volume novel, and I found myself eagerly listening as to how Algy would act his part in the scene; though I was seriously annoyed to think that he should make such a young fool of himself, because, of course, Violet Eversleigh was far above him and completely out of his reach in the social scale. Her father belonged to a grand old county family, was enormously wealthy and related to half the nobility in the land.

Hark, he was commencing:

"Violet, my own Violet, the difficulties you mention surely are not insuperable. If your love for me is as you say so great, will you not wait for me? I shall soon be at the top of my profession and earning a big income, which, though nothing compared with your father's wealth, would keep us in affluence if your father were to stop all supplies. Oh, Violet, when you are near me I am raised from things terrestrial to things celestial. I am a different being, I cannot do without you. When you are away the world is one big blank and I am miserable. I cannot, nay, I will not, live without you. Rank may divide us, conventionality may seek to sever us, but who shall stop that perfect union of hearts which must ever be between thee and me, my own, my lovely Violet. God made us for each other, and shall man dare to separate us? Ah, Violet, while I hold you like this in my arms, I care not if we die here; better to cease to live now than each to live separately hereafter. To touch your hand is to send the life blood coursing through my veins, to kiss your velvety lips is to taste the sweetest nectar."

"Algy, Algy, hush, hush! I too am happy, oh, so happy, when with you; but it cannot be. Hark—there is somebody coming."

Well, here's a nice mess—the young fools.

Wonder what the best plan of action is? Hanged if diplomacy isn't necessary here.

I think that I'll get straight out of this and take a good walk and think it over. The night is yet young, and if I go and talk to Algy now I shall only make an ass of myself; and I must remember that he is no longer a boy to be cajoled and talked to.

Making a hurried excuse to my hostess I left the house, and quickening my pace soon left it far behind me. Musing as I walked along in no pleasant frame of mind, I couldn't help envying poor Algy the triumph he had made in winning Violet Eversleigh's heart.

She was one of those girls, not exactly beautiful—in fact, many people would have said she was only just passable. But eyes, such eyes—eyes that looked you through and through and seemed to read your inmost thoughts. The first time I spoke to her she fixed me with those great black eyes of hers and I was struck all of a heap, so to speak. Those eyes seemed to say, "You are not a good man, John Braithwaite, and you are not leading a good life; there are many dark passages in it which you would rather keep from the public gaze."

Perhaps it is because Algy's life is so transparently pure and good that she has yielded herself up to him. I flatter myself that I am by no means an impressionable sort of a chap, but I believe that I fell head over heels in love with her from the first moment I saw her. Of course I got over it, the same as we all can if we don't give in at the first touch of the fever. In fact, I never for one moment dreamt of her as my own. I loved her from a distance, as I do some of the pictures at the Academy, never contemplating for one moment the purchase of any of them.

"Hang those bells, what do they want to be ringing for at this time of the night? Oh, I forget, of course it is New Year's eve, and I suppose they are going to have some sort of a midnight service.

"Well, I don't object to the innocent amusements of the people who attend midnight services, but I do think that they might have some respect for the feelings of other people and not make the night hideous with their cracked old bells. At any rate I don't seem to be getting any nearer my plan of action. Of course all this nonsense between the two fools must be stopped; but I'll go to bed and sleep over it."

Arriving at my digs I quickly made my way upstairs, and passing Algy's room, the door of which was ajar, I involuntarily glanced in, and what I saw will not be effaced from my memory in a hurry. I am not a good fellow and don't pretend to be. Perhaps it is because I have never had any womankind to

watch over and make much of me and keep my feet from straying where they should not go.

There was Algy on his knees at the open window facing the church, with the moonlight flooding the room and shining on his pale face, in earnest prayer, oblivious of all around.

I don't say my prayers—was never taught to ; I lost my mother when I was quite a child. When I saw him kneeling there with his innocent face raised in earnest supplication to Heaven—my conscience smote me as I thought what a hardened, sinful man of the world I was, and how I prided myself on my knowledge of it, and my cynical utterings on good things in general ; while this boy, who had mixed in the world and yet was not of it, had his ideal, his conscience pure, and could say his prayers. Like a whipped hound I slunk up to bed and soon sunk into a deep slumber.



Whatever good resolutions I may have made as to how to deal with Algy's folly, whilst dressing next morning, were promptly cut short by a loud knocking at the door, and the agitated voice of my landlady crying out :

" Oh ! Mr. Braithwaite, do please come this minute to Mr. Knowles, he be carrying on something fearful and raving like a madman."

With a few strides I was in his room and by his side, and there beheld poor Algy in a wild state of delirium. " H'm," said I, " not to be wondered at, if people will stop by open windows late at night in the depth of winter—this is a case for Dr. Joyce. Cease your chatter, madam," said I to the garrulous old landlady, who was jawing nineteen to the dozen, " and have this note sent round immediately to Dr. Joyce, of Harley Street."

How many a life, how many a project has been lost through useless talk.

The doctor shook his head gravely over Algy's case. " He has brain fever badly," said he, " and a poor physique with which to fight against it. He may pull through if he has unremitting attention and perfect quiet, but the chances are against him. This illness no doubt has been threatening for some time, brought on by over work, and an anxious temperament, and no doubt some great worry."

"If care and watching day and night can save him, he shall be saved," was my mental comment as I bowed the doctor out.

I pass over the scenes that followed this. How can I describe his delirious and distorted fancies whilst fighting against the fever? Violet, all Violet, mixed up with strange snatches of song and music. 'Twas pitiful to see the poor helpless lad tormented with all sorts of strange delusions and demoniacal imaginations. Often I thought he was gone. There were times when his life flickered and trembled in the balance, even as the light of a candle will flicker and tremble in the wind. But a right good fight he made against his fever in spite of his poor physique, and slowly and steadily, and as it were hand over hand and step by step, the doctor and I dragged him from the very jaws of death. It would have been as well in the end if we had let him die there peacefully in his bed.

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One morning, many weeks after the details described in the foregoing, when Algy was almost convalescent and soon would be able to leave his bed, I was having my breakfast in our old sitting-room, the first time for some weeks, when glancing at the morning paper, which of late I had sadly neglected, I cast my eye like a curious woman over the marriage column. With a muttered curse I sprang from my seat and brought my fist down with a bang, scattering cups and saucers in all directions, and said with deeper feeling than I had ever said before, that beautifully expressive word "D—n!" as I read the following paragraph:

"On the 18th instant, at St. Mary Abbott's, Kensington, the Honourable Frank Markham, to Violet Eversleigh, only daughter of Sir William Eversleigh, of Mount Joy House, Belgrave Square."

Why should I have been so annoyed, when here was all my trouble about Algy's folly put an end to? It was because in spite of it all I had hoped to see Algy make a brilliant match, and here was every chance of it in this direction gone. Poor Algy, how should I break the news to him? Oh, conventionality, oh, Society! how many sacrifices are offered up daily on thine altars! How much better than the ancients who tore the hearts from their living victims art thou? who daily tear the hearts from thy victims and, like shorn sheep, send them cut and bleeding into the cruel world to live and suffer alone. Here was the happiness

of two lives ruined to satisfy the unwritten laws of society. Blue blood must be matched by blue, is one of its codes, giving one to understand that it is a pure, untainted liquid rather than the seething mass of corruption it is too often in the aristocracy of to-day.

I was interrupted in my soliloquy by the voice of my landlady, who said : " A letter for Mr. Knowles, sir."

Yes—and in her handwriting, too. Ah, well, there is nothing for me but to go and break the news to him.

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"Algy, my boy, buck up and listen to what I have to say ; I have bad news for you."

Sitting bolt upright in bed he faced me, and in a shaking voice with the madness of despair in it said, " She's married ? "

" It is even so," said I.

Algy said nothing but turned his face to the wall, and I could see that his poor wasted frame was convulsed with sobbing. As I watched the poor boy shaken with that unspoken, uncomplaining sorrow, my heart bled for him.

" Algy," I said, " here is a letter from her, read it. You may find some comfort in it." Like a starved creature he snatched the note from my hand and with feverish haste tore it open, read and re-read it, and then with a mute gesture handed it to me ; it read as follows :

"DEAR ALGY,

" Think not worse of me than you can help. I am forced into this marriage, which is hateful to me. My heart is and always will be yours.

"VIOLET."

I saw now that I must do something to distract Algy's thoughts or he would be in another fever, so I said, " Algy, it never was any comfort to me when I had cut my finger to be told how thankful I ought to be that I wasn't like Mr. So-and-So, who had his leg cut off, but it always was a comfort if I had to have a tooth out and I found some friend with the toothache who also had to have one out, so that we could go together comrades in misfortune. I am your comrade in misfortune, listen to me

You would no doubt scarcely credit it that John Braithwaite, who scoffs at love and all things pertaining to it, that honest John the lady-killer and hopeless flirt has himself been bitten, and carries in his heart a wound which festers, ever festers, and refuses to heal.

"I, like you, at one time honoured and venerated woman as an ideal creature, and fell hopelessly in love with one who apparently reciprocated it. Well, she got everything she could out of me and then flung me aside like a broken toy, and married a rich man. I am proud, that woman never knew how I suffered, if indeed she knew I suffered at all.

"I sent her a wedding present and attended her wedding, though God alone knows what I suffered there. When the wedding march echoed and sounded through that church it seemed as if my heart was the instrument being played upon, and ten thousand devils from hell tormenting me.

"As I watched them drive off a dull ache took possession of me, and I have never yet lost it. All the world seemed a blank, nothing interested me. I was like a distraught being. I left that church a bad man, and for every caress I received from that woman I have returned a hundred-fold to her kind, and have no doubt bestowed as much pain as I have received. I went abroad, tried to forget; it is said that time softens and alleviates every pain, I have not yet proved the truth of the saying.

"I tell you all this, which I have told to no other living soul, so that you can see that I, being afflicted with the same malady as yourself, can feel for you with all my heart as a comrade in distress, but you have at least the consolation of knowing that your love is really true in her heart to you."

* * * * *

Months had flown by, Algie was well and strong again, and after a prolonged stay in the country had returned to London and his profession. By mutual consent a certain subject was never broached between us, and though he tried to appear gay and bright, I could see that a silent sorrow had taken all the happiness from his youthful life.

His voice had greatly benefited by the long rest, and he was more popular than ever. To-day might be seen placarded in many of the London railway stations and on the hoardings in

the streets : "Empress Hall—Mr. Algernon Knowles, to-night ! " Yes, it was to be a grand concert, and I accompanied Algie there, in fact I nearly always did at night-time now, because I had a sort of uneasy feeling that in a fit of despondency he might do away with himself.

Glancing round the densely-packed hall, a startled exclamation escaped my lips as I again saw Violet and her husband seated in the second row of the stalls.

"What refinement of cruelty is this," thought I. Oh, woman, how cruel you can be when you like ! Here was a man whose heart she had trampled upon, however unwillingly, and she was come to gaze on the mangled remains. Man, you think, is a great strong creature, like the crocodile invulnerable, and can stand anything ; aye, but even the crocodile has his tender part, and that in the region of the heart, and so it is with man.

"Algy will break down," thought I, "when he sees her ; however, it can't be helped."

There were a few opening pieces and then Algy came on, and was received with immense applause. I watched him slowly scanning the audience till his eyes caught hers. He turned deathly pale and walked up to the accompanist and substituted a song for the one on the programme. I don't remember its name, but I shall never forget it, or his rendering of it. It was a song of despair and disappointed love. Never did he sing so well before, the audience were enraptured. Little did they guess that the sadness and pathos thrown into it were real and wrung from his very heart-strings. I thought once that he was going to break down, but though his voice quavered and shook he carried it through to the end. Then the applause was deafening ; plaudits after plaudits and cry after cry rang through that hall, but one that sounded above every other one was the cry of "Fire !" It was taken up by a dozen voices, and the audience rose to their feet panic-stricken. Quick as lightning the conductor turned to the huge choir, and with a gesture gave the signal for the commencement of the oratorio "Lauda Zion." The effect for the moment was magical. Many of the people seated themselves again as three hundred voices commenced in solemn grandeur, "Praise Jehovah ! Bow before Him." It was a weird and awful moment, the solemnity of the music, the crowding at the exits and the unmistakable smell of fire.

"Fire! Fire! Fire!" again sounded through the building. This time the people with one accord rose from their seats and scrambled for the exits pell mell, trampling upon and pushing aside every one in their way. Even the conductor had lost all hold on his choir, each one seeking to save himself.

To add to the horrors of that scene the electric light suddenly failed, leaving only a flickering gas jet here and there, which served but to show up the awful scene in its worst light. It verily seemed to be one seething, struggling mass of human bodies, and the piercing shrieks which went up from the women and children were awful to hear.

All this which takes so long to tell happened in a moment of time. Whilst I coolly kept my seat determining not to be mangled up in the crowd, I suddenly saw Algy dart from the platform, and with the gleam of madness in his eye rush toward the prostrate form of Violet, who had fainted. Taking her up lightly in his arms he rushed in the opposite direction to the crowd, towards one of the great corridors, from whence smoke and fire were issuing in great volumes. I yelled to him to stop but with a defiant cry he rushed on into the thick of it all. For my own sake I had to fall back, as the smoke was choking me. As the fire was at present confined to one part of the hall, people were now going out in a more orderly fashion. At last the vast building was emptied of its thousands and the fire was having uninterrupted sway; but the efforts of the firemen, who had arrived on the scene, soon began to have marked effect, and in a very little time it was all got under. I stepped up to one of the firemen and said that I could give information as to two people who were confined in one part of the building, and was allowed to accompany him. What a sight met our gaze as we entered; dead and charred bodies in all directions, more with the life crushed out of them than burnt.

Of course, you remember all this because it was in the papers at the time, and yet no one stirs hand or foot to improve the exits of these great buildings; and if there was a fire there to-morrow the result would be the same.

Well, I led the fireman on to where I saw the last of Algy and Violet, and at last, after a great deal of searching, we came upon them charred and almost unrecognizable, tightly locked in each other's arms.

Violet's husband's body was found, or rather I found it, crushed and quite unrecognizable, so I claimed it as Algy's ; and Algy's and Violet's bodies were buried as husband and wife ; and, though in life they were parted, in death they were side by side. Perhaps the deception was wrong, but in a higher world and better they are united. There we are told that there are no marriages, perhaps because man has made such a hash of the institution on earth ; there love reigns supreme and the laws of conventionality and society are unknown.

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My story is finished ; gruesome one, isn't it ? If it had not been true it would have ended happily, but truth rarely does. They were fools together to the end, and as fools suffered for their folly.

Mix me a glass of grog, and make it strong, please.

St. Martin's Summer.

I HOLD her letter in my hand ; the first she wrote to me, the last she will ever write.

Strange, how the few brief words recall the old life.

As I close my eyes to the deepening shadows of this alien twilight, the pictures of home start up vividly before me ; the red-roofed cottages, the cool meadows, the brown and purple hills, her face, and his.

I am glad she thought of me at the last, and my share in the story of those days, although *his* was the central figure.

I had always looked after him since we were boys together at school ; he—delicate, clever, impulsive, I—big, strong, slow, tenacious, with the average Englishman's feeling, half contemptuous, half admiring, for art, poetry and dreams.

Yet we were friends always, and now—if he came towards me at this moment, I should leap to my feet, and as my clumsy hands closed round his, and I looked down into those great sparkling eyes, all the old feelings would re-awaken as fresh as ever, and I should begin to listen, advise, console, just as in those long dead years.

But he has a fair young wife for his counsellor now, and a home amidst the quiet English woodlands, while I am lying on my back, with a Western prairie stretching along for miles and miles in front of me ; and between us two and those old days lie leagues of distance and the unfathomable ocean.

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We were staying together in a little rustic inn amongst the Surrey hills.

Things had gone hardly with him just then and, being sensitive, he suffered accordingly.

The girl he loved with all the ardour of such a fellow's first passion had jilted him for a rich man, gone abroad, and died. He had got over the first pangs—ye gods ! I can see him now, tramping up and down brandishing his paint brushes, declaring his career was ruined, his art valueless, his life a wreck !

Well, that sort of thing could not last.

I had never been in love myself—then—but I was pretty sure, nevertheless, that life means something more than one great passion.

I'm not denying that this may colour a man's life through and through, but for most of us, mercifully, there's plenty of wholesome drudgery to keep us going, so that while the days of our life are three score years and ten, it is strange to think what a comparatively small space therein is occupied by love's young dream.

And so Frank came gradually back to his normal condition. He liked our quarters, found the village interesting, the surroundings picturesque, and before long was mooning about with his sketch-book and verses in pretty much the old way.

It was a great relief to me ; I don't know why I should have bothered, but, somehow, whenever he cried for some figurative moon, I always felt it was unreasonable of the planet to remain inaccessible, and did my best to provide him with an available substitute.

One night he came in saying we were no longer the only visitors in the place.

He had seen a girl coming out of an old farmhouse, and watched her from a distance, sketching, he believed.

"I daresay she can't draw a bit, but if she is intelligent and has eyes—I must find out what she is like. One wants a sympathetic companion in a place like this—no offence to you, old fellow?"

"Not the slightest," I replied placidly.

"Make acquaintance with the girl if you like, but take care of yourself."

He looked at me reproachfully. "You needn't fear. A burnt child, &c.," he said.

Next evening we were returning from a stroll over the hills, and for a short cut into the village we took a path which brought us out into a little hollow, sparsely wooded with tall fir trees.

Clumps of already yellowing bracken were dotted about the uneven ground, and here and there a few late dog-roses clung to their trailing brambles.

The western sky was ablaze with gold. Shafts of glory slanted through the fir trees, burnishing their red stems and dappling the

ground with patches of colour and shade. They shone also upon the figure of a girl in a greyish dress and large hat pushed carelessly back, who stood a little below us, stooping forward as though she sought something.

We had turned into the place so suddenly that I stopped half involuntarily to look. I am not good at description, and I never pretended to artistic sensibilities, but somehow the little scene impressed me with its quiet beauty.

I looked round at Frank—yes, he felt it too; no doubt his artist's eyes saw a thousand things to which I was blind.

He leaned forward with that eager, rapt expression which gave his face such power and charm, and for a few moments we both gazed in silence.

Then he stepped lightly down to the girl's side, lifted his hat, and said with his easy smiling grace :

"Excuse me, you are looking for something. Can I help you? I think I saw you yesterday, sketching."

The girl raised her eyes to his face, eyes that matched her dress—a sort of lavender grey. She spoke with a certain shy, old-fashioned courtesy, I thought. "Thank you; you are very kind. I have only dropped my book, at least not exactly a book——"

"Your sketch book, perhaps?" put in Frank. "I am an artist, too; I know what that loss is."

"No," she said, blushing slightly. "I cannot draw, unfortunately. It is only a MS. book."

"Ah, then you write, that is almost the same thing; we are still akin," Frank said with his smile.

The girl blushed a deeper red. "Indeed, no; it was but a note book—a journal. I was sitting here this afternoon and I suppose I dropped it; but please do not trouble," as Frank began poking about and kicking aside bits of brushwood in rather an aimless way.

"It is not worth wasting your time over, and I must be getting back too, I left my aunt waiting for me."

Frank made a casual remark about the neighbourhood, and they turned towards the opening into the high road, chatting, while I followed behind. Our ways soon divided, and as Frank and I returned to our inn he looked at me with an amused air.

"You see the acquaintance has begun. I'm sorry she does not

draw, but she looks appreciative ; not pretty, but a good intellectual face. Not very young either—all the better—more chance of sensible companionship.” Then, “ Odd now, that little hollow has never struck me before to-night. Momentary effect of light and shade, I suppose.” And as Frank’s remarks became professional my attention wandered.

After dinner he was dozing in the arm-chair, tired with his walk, while I tramped up and down outside with my pipe.

It was a clear, still night, with a bright bit of moon high up in the sky. Suddenly it occurred to me I might saunter on as far as those fir trees and look for the girl’s book—it would be something to do.

I was soon standing in the dark little hollow—how different it looked now ! Almost ghostly, I thought, as I began prodding about with my stick.

One side, there was a bit of chalky bank which jutted out behind a stunted little fir tree ; I went up there, and looking over, saw something lying amongst the stones.

I fished it up, and when I got back into the road I saw in big handwriting across the paper-covered book : “ Ruth Fairfax.”

The name suited her ; I liked it.

Then I went on to the farmhouse where Frank said she was staying, and seeing a maidservant leaning over the outside gate, I gave it to her with a brief message.

Frank was gone to bed when I returned, and next morning he went off early into the neighbouring town, leaving word for me to meet him as he walked back.

I was swinging along a few hours later, when I saw her—Miss Fairfax—and an elderly lady coming towards me.

I should have passed with a slight salutation, but she made a step after me, and I halted. “ I think you are one of the gentlemen I saw yesterday,” she began in her shy, hesitating manner. “ It was your friend, I expect, who so kindly looked for and found my book. Will you please thank him, and say I am so glad to have it back ? ”

“ Certainly ; I am—he will be pleased,” I stammered. I have not Frank’s fluent ease. And then with a bow I passed on.

If she thought *he* found her book, what did it matter ? I said nothing to him about it—it didn’t seem worth while.

A few days later he told me he was on quite good terms with

the ladies at Hackett's farm. He had called and been made formally acquainted with the aunt. They were both "nice women, a trifle stiff and old-fashioned perhaps—I fancy they have known hard times, but are better off now. The girl—for in spite of her age she is very girlish in some ways—has been a governess. They are here for the aunt's health. She has slaved away in the past, I'm sure—evidently takes life *au grand sérieux*, yet there is humour in her, too. She looks charming when her eyes light up. Seems made up of contrasts, which is rather interesting."

"The aunt or the niece?" I asked, from behind my pipe. Frank looked at me a moment, and gave a fretful little laugh.

"What an irritating old stoic you are, Dick! Doesn't a young woman interest you more than an old one?"

"Never had much to do with either," I said; "and I thought you never meant to again."

He frowned and then sighed, and I felt remorseful. "After all, women are the salt of life," he murmured, and then he came up and put his hand on my shoulder: "Look here, old fellow, won't you let sleeping dogs lie? All *that* sort of thing is over, you know, but is that a reason for eschewing friendliness with this or any other chance acquaintance? This girl is interesting—has read and thought more than most. She admits her life is dull; why shouldn't we cheer it a little? Come with me and see them this afternoon, and judge for yourself whether friendship is not possible and desirable."

I went, and we sat out in the old-fashioned garden and talked, at least she and Frank did, about books chiefly; and Frank made sketches and tore them up again, and she laughed at him and with him; and then tea came, and afterwards we strolled home through the cool green lanes.

This was the first of many similar afternoons, until it came to be understood that when we had nothing else to do we should meet on the shady lawn for tea, while the rooks cawed overhead, and the bees hummed in and out of the tall hollyhocks and sunflowers with which the borders were ablaze. And from the cornfields beyond came the voices of the reapers, and sometimes a great waggon lumbered by under the privet hedge, laden with harvested grain.

"'A haunt of ancient peace,'" murmured Frank one day, as he lay on the grass, and even to me the words brought their spell.

The elder Miss Fairfax was a placid woman, who knitted and read with an enjoyment which seemed to need no outward expression ; and as I was not much of a talker, we suited each other very well.

Meanwhile the acquaintance between Frank and Ruth ripened fast.

She looked better and brighter every day ; the old formalities and shyness wore off, smiles and sparkling little jests came readily to her lips—her whole nature seemed to be rejoicing in the sunshine of congenial intercourse.

And every thought and feeling was mirrored in those truthful eyes. I have seen them by turns, laughing, pathetic, shy, resolute and proud ; and once or twice, when Frank was tired or moody, I saw them resting on him with an anxious tenderness, like the eyes of a newly-made mother.

And so the weeks went by, until I grew to feel that if Frank cared to win her he might wed the one woman in the world most suited to crown and perfect his life.

Late one night he came to my room with a flushed, eager face.

He had an idea, he said, an idea for a picture ; if adequately treated and worked out, it should mean success.

This was good news ; for months past I had been vainly trying to get him to work.

He began pacing up and down the room after his usual impetuous fashion.

“I got it first out of Browning,” he began.

“*Browning!*” I suppressed an involuntary groan. “We were looking over some of his poems to-day,” he went on, unheeding, “and suddenly it came to me. I saw the whole thing before me, distinct and beautiful. That little hollow by the fir trees, you know, with the moonlight slanting through the trees and touching the dark recesses of the wood with silvery gleams—shining full upon the figures of the lovers in the foreground.

“Then behind, deep down in the hollow, lurks the phantom of the old love, shadowy, indistinct—a sort of silver mist against the gaunt, dark firs. You know, in the poem”—he paused in front of me and half drew out a book from his breast pocket.

“But there, what’s the use of reading it to you? You’re such a Philistine. You wouldn’t understand.”

“No, I certainly shouldn’t,” I said. “But if you can tell the

story in plain words—if it *has* a story—I'll do my best to follow you."

"Story?" echoed Frank, as he began to march up and down again. "Everybody must make the story for themselves. *My* interpretation—my picture shows me this: Two lovers at their tryst, under a glorious moon, and all the accessories of a balmy autumn evening. It is the old, old story—with a difference. Even as their eyes meet, they are conscious of a chill breath of doubt. Theirs is no first love—memories are rising out of the past like phantoms. What if the new love be but a pale reflection of by-gone passion? Which shall prevail—the dead or the living—'Ghosts—oh, breathing Beauty!'" and he broke off muttering—lines from the poem, I supposed.

"Well," I said at last, "it sounds rather vague to me—moonshine and ghosts—but I daresay it's all right. So you mean to lay your scene in the little fir wood? Is Miss Fairfax to come into it at all?"

Frank looked at me as if I were a long way off. "Y—es," he said absently. "Altered—idealized, I may use her face."

"And I suppose you've talked it all over with her?" I said carelessly. "She knows your ideas about it?"

"We have been talking of nothing else," he said. "We have visited the hollow, and chosen the exact spot. Why—I may say she is the inspiration of the picture."

"Oh," I said, and was silent for a minute. "Then, since you have got as far as that, I conclude——" and then I stopped; it seemed difficult to finish the sentence satisfactorily.

Frank paused in his restless pacing, and again stood before me. "You conclude—what?" he said irritably.

"Oh, I don't know," I said. "At least, I don't know how you artists and poets conduct your relations with women, but it seems to me that when a man can discuss love-poems and lovers with a girl for the best part of a day, and puts her face into his picture afterwards, it argues a degree of mutual interest and confidence which——" again I hesitated, and Frank laughed.

"Dear old Dick, you're so overpoweringly prosaic. You lack appreciation of the exigencies of art."

"Very likely," I rejoined, "I am a plain man."

"Like Dickens' Mr. Bounderby? Don't brag of it, as he did, my friend. Seriously, old fellow, you needn't exercise your mind

over my relations with Ruth Fairfax. We are on confidential terms, I admit. We get on capitally together, but I don't think we are anything more than friends, or ever shall be."

"You don't *think*," I said, sternly perhaps.

"Well, then, I am sure. I don't believe she cares for me, Dick."

"You don't? And don't you care for her?" I asked. Frank fidgetted. His gaze wandered round the room, and then came back to my face. "On my soul, Dick, I don't know. Sometimes I have thought I did. She has done much for me, and if I were sure she cared—but she doesn't. You should hear her laugh at me sometimes; she has an eye for all my little weaknesses, and there is a spice of sarcasm in her quiet tones. For all that, she would make a fellow the best of wives—true as steel. But I'm not sure of myself. I couldn't risk it all over again. And then, why spoil things as they are? Let us enjoy the present, gather the roses, &c., &c. And indeed, Dick, she doesn't care for me." And with this assurance he left me.

Next day we spent some hours in the hollow under the fir trees.

Frank set up his easel and began to make his first study for the picture.

The elder Miss Fairfax spread a rug in the most sheltered corner, "out of the draughts," as she said, and sat knitting peacefully.

I lounged amongst the bracken with a pile of papers, and was supposed to read aloud, but my hearers were inattentive, and I gradually lapsed into silence, unremarked.

Ruth flitted about rather restlessly; sometimes she looked over Frank's shoulder, and they exchanged a few words about his work, but their intercourse was certainly less happy than usual. Frank was in one of his irritable moods, by turns gloomy and sarcastic, and Ruth seemed little inclined to humour him.

Instead of her usual pliancy and soft good-humoured raillery, there was a hardness in her little sallies quite new to me. She seemed animated by a spirit of contradiction; the more moody and cross Frank became, the more she opposed him, until at last, during some dispute as to the right interpretation of the *motif* of the picture—as far as I could understand it—Frank threw down his brushes suddenly and was beginning an impa-

tient protest, when she made him a mocking little salutation, and declaring it was idle to argue with an angry man, turned quickly away.

I watched her as she wandered on towards the hilly slopes behind the belt of fir trees, until she was out of sight.

Frank resumed his work in frowning silence. What did it all mean, I wondered. Was it only after the fashion of lovers, or was I wrong and Frank right—did she not care, after all?

About an hour later, Miss Fairfax had risen and proposed an adjournment for tea, adding plaintively: "Where *can* Ruth be?" when we saw her coming back to us, springing lightly down the hill with her hands full of wild flowers and grasses. She looked very pretty, I thought, with her hot flushed cheeks and brightened eyes.

I turned to collect our various belongings, and a few moments later I saw that she and Frank were good friends again.

They stood side by side, chatting and laughing; Frank's ill temper was gone, and he was putting some of her harebells into his buttonhole; but when, afterwards, I expected to drop into my usual position, and bring up the rear alone, or with Miss Fairfax, I found she had gone on with Frank, and that Ruth herself was waiting for me at the bend, where the wood opened into the high road. She looked up at me with her softly smiling eyes: "Do you *always* stay behind to pack up Mr. Drayton's things?" she said.

"Well, generally, I suppose," I replied.

She laughed: "I notice he depends on you to do all the hard work. Why couldn't you let him carry his own paraphernalia? Why do you spoil him so?"

"Habit, I suppose," I said reflectively. "That is as good a reason as we can give for most of our proceedings, isn't it?"

She was silent for a moment, and then said with a sorrowful earnestness that startled me:

"You have shown me what friendship means, Mr. Vane." Then we came up with the others, and walked back to the farm together.

That night I could not sleep; all sorts of impossible fancies came crowding into my mind, and when I did drop into a doze I was haunted by the ghost of Frank's projected picture—a ghost with Ruth's pleading eyes.

At last I got up in despair, lighted my pipe, and began to read, but even this hardly quieted me. By the time morning dawned I had come to a resolve.

I could not stand this kind of life any longer. It was all very well for Frank—besides, he had his art—but for me, in rude health, with my thews and sinews, the *dolce far niente* was a mistake.

I would go off and explore the neighbouring villages; ten or twelve miles of stiff walking every day for a week would put me to rights.

Perhaps by that time——

Anyhow, I must go. So I left a note for Frank, and slinging a knapsack on to my back, stepped out into the tranquil morning freshness. I covered a good bit of ground in my solitary rambles, and one evening, just a week later, tramped back into Hillbury.

I went straight to our inn and asked for Frank. He was out, they said, probably working at his picture; he was very busy now every day.

I went up to the little hollow, and found him there alone, hard at work.

He welcomed me gladly, but turned back to his picture, declaring no power on earth must detach him from it until it was finished.

"Now the moon is full, I come back here every night and keep on for hours. You can't think how jolly the moonlight effects are. I tell you, Dick, I shall score a big success with this," he said exultantly, and as I looked I thought he was right.

Yet it irritated me, somehow. Why, if he must choose this place, could he not have painted it as we saw it first, aglow with the warm sunset light, with the gold falling like a glory upon her as she stood—but what did I know about these things?

Then after a time I asked after them—the two ladies. "Oh, they were all right when they left," Frank said carelessly. "They went two—three days ago."

Gone, gone altogether! I was not prepared for this. "And you let her go? I mean, are you not going to see them again?" I stammered.

Somehow it seemed so strange that she should pass out of

our life so suddenly. "Yes, of course, some day when we get back to town," he replied. "The old lady gave me her card—wait a minute, here it is, while I think of it; take care of it for me, there's a good fellow, I'm safe to lose it. We'll make a pilgrimage together to the north of London, and find them out. They left no end of kind messages for you."

"And didn't she seem—weren't they sorry to go?" I asked feebly. Frank laughed.

"My dear Dick, you sound quite sentimental! Is it the old lady? You shouldn't have gone off so abruptly."

"Shut up, Frank. You know what I mean," I said roughly. Frank turned and looked at me; his face was unclouded; his eyes had the old, bright, eager look.

"Dear old chap, you worry over me like some kindly old chaperon with half-a-dozen susceptible girls. It's all right, I assure you. Ruth Fairfax and I are the best of friends; that is all—there is nothing else possible. Now aren't you satisfied? If you will wait five minutes I'll come with you to dinner, for directly after I must get back here again. I'm afraid it will be rather slow for you; but you can console yourself with the fact that I have at last followed your virtuous counsels, and am satisfactorily at work."

I had certainly never seen him so keen on anything before; he worked at white heat, evidently untroubled by regrets or memories. But how about Ruth?

I asked myself the question as I wandered about the place alone, and at every turn in the road it seemed as if I must come upon the familiar little figure. . . .

Afterwards, when we were settled down again in town, I suggested our going to call on the Misses Fairfax.

Frank expressed his willingness, but he could never find a free afternoon, so one day I went alone.

They lived in a dull little villa in a dingy suburb, and their small drawing-room looked rather prim and cheerless on the grey November day.

I think they were pleased to see me, but Ruth was pale and quiet; the old, shy reserve seemed to have overtaken her.

The aunt invited me cordially to call again, adding, they had

but few visitors—theirs was rather a monotonous life. Ruth flushed a little, but said nothing.

Next time Frank accompanied me; we all had tea together, and he and Ruth chatted in the old way—at least, Frank seemed to think so. To me, there was a difference; she was no longer the Ruth of the old farmhouse garden.

With the spring, Frank's triumphs began. His picture was accepted, and well hung in the Academy; the critics were kind, and the public followed its leaders.

It was discussed at artistic *réunions* and select dinner-parties, and fine ladies added a word or two on the subject of the painter. "A coming man they say, my dear; young and handsome, too—quite an ideal artist."

And so the ideal artist got to be invited out a good deal, and soon became one of the lions or playthings of a section of London society.

I heard all this, but business took me away from town a good deal; and it was on one of the last days in June, when I found myself in Piccadilly, that I resolved to look in and see Frank's masterpiece for the first time since its promotion.

I pushed my way amongst the well-dressed crowd until I reached the fifth room, where the picture was hung.

A little group stood round, and I amused myself with listening to some of the comments of our art-loving public.

"Imaginative power? I repeat, sir," a long-haired man was saying to his companion, "in our decadent days, art has but two modes of expression open to her, landscape and portraiture. This is neither. Pah!" And they passed on.

"No. 553," exclaimed a short, stout matron to her young daughter. "Ah, this was what Helen said we were to be *sure* and not miss—by some new young man. Let me see, what is it called, my dear?"

"'St. Martin's Summer,' mamma," read out the girl.

Mamma raised her *pince-nez*, and bobbed and twisted her head until she caught sight of the picture from under a tall old gentleman's elbow.

"'St. Martin's Summer'—are you sure, Ethel? What an odd title. I don't quite understand it."

"There is some poetry in the catalogue, mamma, perhaps that explains it," and the girl read out :

"Ay, dead loves are the potent
Like any cloud they used you,
Mere semblance you, but substance they !"

"Ah, yes," murmured the stout lady vaguely; but even with the advantage of the Browning commentary, I doubt if she quite understood.

Suddenly Ruth Fairfax emerged from the heart of the little crowd; she saw me, and we greeted simultaneously and withdrew into a quiet corner to talk.

She looked very ill, I thought, with purple shadows under her eyes, and the grey hue of her dress seemed to add to her pallor; but she declared herself well, "only feeling the heat," and then spoke of Frank.

"Have you seen him lately," I asked.

She shook her head: "He has so many engagements. How could he be expected to come and see us? But *you* have seen him?"

"I have been away," I said shortly, "but even if I hadn't——"

She looked up quickly.

"I am sure he doesn't neglect you, Mr. Vane."

I growled something about his "fine friends."

"Hush," she said reproachfully; "you know you are glad that he should be famous and admired. Now—his picture, you have said nothing about it. Isn't it a grand success? Confess you are proud of your friend."

No; as I looked at her face I could not feel proud of my friend then.

"I don't know anything about these things," I said moodily.
"It is all too mystical for me."

She laughed a little.

"Well, I admire it immensely, and I assisted at its genesis, you know. Why, I believe once, in a moment of enthusiasm, Mr. Drayton declared I had been its inspiration. Is not that something to be proud of?" I looked at her; she turned away her face quickly.

"I *hate* the picture!" I said abruptly.

"And I love it," she said softly. "He has immortalized the little green hollow."

Then, as she turned to go, with a slight movement of her hand towards it: "Goodbye, *my* 'St. Martin's Summer.'"

When I next visited Crescent Road I found the elder Miss Fairfax ill.

"At least, not very ill," Ruth said. "She has always been delicate, and now as she grows older I fear she will become a chronic invalid."

"And you are always with her?" I said involuntarily, as I looked at her pale, thin face.

"Of course," she said simply; "we have only each other."

"But you must go out sometimes—you need some change," I said brusquely, for it hurt me to see how rapidly she was becoming middle-aged, with her grave and care-worn aspect.

"Where should I go?" she said with a sad little smile. "We have no friends. We have always been lonely women—auntie and I. All my youth was spent in teaching; I was busy, I had no time for 'making friends' as people call it. I have never known what society meant—or only from the outside, and from books. When my aunt inherited her little property she made me come to live with her, but our habits were formed; we did not care for strangers, and they did not care for us—two dull, insignificant women. So we have been let alone, and we have gone on together in our quiet ways. It does not sound very cheerful to you, I daresay, Mr. Vane, but you see I am used to it."

And now her aunt's health was failing and she would wear out her maturity in the ceaseless little services, the wearying routine, an invalid's days demanded, with memories for her heart-companions.

No; it was not a cheerful life.

About this time I conceived the idea of purchasing Frank's picture. I managed it secretly through an artist friend, for I did not want him to know of it. Some day, perhaps, I might tell him, but not now. So in due time the canvas which had won Frank fame passed into my possession. I did not unpack it, but carried it case and all into my dressing-room, and there it stood in a dark corner against the wall, until—but I anticipate.

The following Christmas I heard news which hardly surprised me. Frank was engaged to the daughter of the house where he was staying, a beautiful girl of eighteen. His letter was a cata-

logue of her charms, detailed with the rapture alike of artist and lover.

It was bound to come—I had long foreseen it. How should I tell Ruth?

But she took it very quietly: "Only hoped he would be very happy," in her low fervent tones.

"Would I tell him so when I went to his marriage?"

It was some months after this event that I received a summons to America from an eccentric old uncle of mine, whom I had not seen for years. His affairs needed attention; he had no one to depend upon but me—his appointed heir. Would I go out to him at once? I thought it over. There was only one thing—one person—to keep me in England; but what *she* willed—

Well, I would put my fate to the touch. I went down there one midsummer evening. She was sitting alone by the open window; there was a box of mignonette on the sill outside: its fragrance seemed to fill the little room as we talked; at least, I tried to talk quietly, indifferently, as usual, but I could not. Then I got up hurriedly, and began. I told her what my uncle wished. For myself it was immaterial whether I went or stayed; I had no near kindred, no ties here—only one great desire. Would she be my wife?

Almost before I said it she had risen and put up her hand quickly, as though to check the words; then all my long-suppressed feeling—the love that had lain in my heart since the day I first saw her—overcame me suddenly, and my passion leapt forth like a thing unchained. I poured out wild, burning words—words which a man utters but once in a lifetime.

"Oh, hush, my friend, hush!" she said brokenly; and as I saw her standing up before me so pale, so pure, with only a great pathos shining in the grey, true eyes, I was silenced, and turning from her, covered my face with my hands, and in those next few minutes tasted a bitterness worse than death's.

By-and-by I heard her speaking, and felt her touch upon my arm.

"I am sorry—so sorry. You are true and good—do I not know it? But my heart is dead, or rather, it is full of one dead memory. You must not blame me—you will not—for you guessed it long ago, I think; even in those old days I often saw you watching me. Oh, how could I help it? He came to me in

those glowing days, and brought youth and joy into my life, which had known so little of either! He stirred within me thoughts, impulses, tastes, that I never knew I possessed, I began to *live*, and life for the first time seemed very fair.

"And at first I thought he cared—no, do not raise your head in quick reproach—he never *meant* to deceive, that I know—it was my own mistake. Later, I discovered it; I came to understand that he had loved before, and when we read that poem, when he began to talk of his picture, I knew. Then I recognized just what I was to him; I might have guessed before, but I was so ignorant—I never—But you must not blame him, or compassionate me," she went on, more firmly. "I am content; I had my reward. His genius used me; I reconciled him to life, to art; I inspired the work which won his fame. Could the woman he loves have done more?"

"And now it is over," I said hoarsely, perhaps a little bitterly. "You have said it is *dead*. Can you think of no one but him? Others can love again—cannot you—some day—also forget?"

She looked at me sadly, and shook her head. "It is too late. Oh, forgive me, my friend! You, too, love him, and you are faithful. With the young, scars heal, impressions are fleeting. I had dreamed of love and romance, as girls do; I was a woman when the reality came. It was St. Martin's Summer—all the summer I had ever known."

Before I left, we spoke of the future. I gave her my banker's address, and made her promise, if she was in any trouble—if she needed me—to write. Then we parted.

She came with me down the gravel path to the little iron gate. At the corner of the road I looked back; she was still standing there, and the sunset light burned in the sky behind—almost as when I saw her first.

Next week I sailed for America, but before I went, I sent her Frank's picture.

I have wandered about for seven years, and my life has been varied and adventurous enough; lately my thoughts have turned longingly homewards, but only a few days ago a letter was put into my hand.

The envelope was crossed and re-addressed many times over, but it had found me at last. And this was what I read:

. . . "They tell me I have not long to live now, and I know they are right.

"My thoughts often go back to that happiest time in my life. . . . You have not forgotten it, I know, for you were always faithful—to him—to me. Whenever I have heard or read of friendship, I have thought of you.

"We shall meet again some day, you and I and he; I have always believed that, and it is not wrong to hope for it, for then we shall be as the angels in Heaven, and know as we are known. The picture has been carefully packed, and sent to the address you gave me; they will keep it for you until you come home. Good-bye. God bless you.—RUTH."

When I lifted my head an hour afterwards, I felt that England held nothing for me; there was no longer anything to go home for. The picture could stay where it was; the seasons would come and go as of old, but time and change would not touch St. Martin's Summer: hers—and mine.

GERTRUDE MOUNT.

Martin Sprague.

A FIREMAN'S STORY.

By EMILIA AYLMER GOWING.

**HAVE you heard the fame of our comrade, Sirs, young Martin
Ernest Sprague?**

**Do you mind the tale of that gallant life, with more than a
memory vague?**

**As the sparks fly upward, the noble deed was carried far and
fast**

**On many a lip ; and the name stands there, on our roll of honour,
last.**

**A crash like thunder was heard that night 'midst the rush and
roar of the Strand ;**

**The terror-blanced faces were scattered and fled through clouds
of smoke and sand.**

**Was it crime or earthquake? burst followed burst, and a mighty
ruin fell**

**Of havocked houses and human forms in smoking heaps—pell
mell !**

A cry of women ! a panic flight of children, wild with fear ;

A mournful train of the wounded borne to ready succour near :

**Behind them flashed red tongues of flame athirst for living prey :
Fast bound and buried beneath the wreck the fated victims lay.**

**Captain and men, we came at call to battle with the foe,
And wrest from the crush of the ruined mass the wretches pent
below.**

**Our work was done, and a warning word bade fly the deadly
fall**

**Of tottering rafters above our head, and tumbling roof and
wall.**

Too late ! too sudden swift the shock ; another earthquake's
sound,
And both struck down, by my Captain's side I lay on the
heaving ground.

He rose with battered helm, and turned, like a mariner tempest-
tossed,
As the smoke and dust-clouds lifted slow, to count how many
lost ?

He told our numbers, man by man ; and, as he called the roll,
Swift answer followed upon each name from every living soul.

Ay, save one only—Martin Sprague. A pause—and the silence
ran
Through the blood in our veins, till it froze with fear for the
buried living man.

Who cared for himself ? We flung in our lives, if haply we
might free
Our comrade, swallowed up beneath a mountain of débris.

They brought the lightning-kindled lamp from the pleasure-
house of song,
And beneath its search, as keen as day, we toiled the slow night
long.

At last ! a faint and distant moan replied from the hollow deep ;
And we force our way through the narrow rifts where a snake
might hardly creep.

Joy, joy ! Once more we looked on his face—where his body,
wedged in pain,
Lay moveless through two awful hours while we wrought with
might and main.

Ay, two hours yet in the grips of death, and released in the early
morn,
We lifted him tenderly back to life like a helpless babe new-born.

Deft nurses moved about his bed, as in dreamy peace he lay,
Past cure, past hope for this fading world, that long, long
parting day.

With the sweetest, strongest bonds of earth the heroic spirit was
bound ;
With honour's garland about his brow of youth by valour wound :
With nature's treasures, love's closest, best delights to our bosom
given ;
The wife, the mother, the babe he left, when he passed to God at
even.

LONDON SOCIETY.

MARCH, 1896.

A Modern Comedy of Errors.

By DARLEY DALE,

Author of "THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH," "THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT," etc.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE INQUEST.

DR. DURSLEY was down late the morning after his journey to Eastfolk, and it was past ten before he sat down to receive his patients and answer his letters while waiting for them in his consulting-room. He employed a secretary for an hour or two every morning, and after he had pencilled the answers in shorthand to his letters Nona always took them and any supplementary messages to his amanuensis.

"I am writing to the Queen, Nona, about being called Sir Peter, and if you like you shall post the letter when you go out with the boys."

"A telegram, sir," interrupted the butler.

"All right," said Dr. Dursley, little thinking it was all wrong instead of all right, and he finished and, with Nona's help, sealed the letter accepting the baronetcy before he opened the telegram.

"Patient died last night. Opium-poisoning, overdose. Inquest to-day. Writing. Paul." This was the astounding news which greeted Dr. Dursley as, after dismissing Nona, he opened the yellow envelope. He threw himself back in his chair, muttered something under his breath, read the message again and again, and finally seized a telegraph-form, wrote on it, rang the bell furiously, and ordered Drummond to send the message off at once.

This was the message :—

“Opium-poisoning impossible. Pill only contained one grain. Delay inquest till I arrive by 3.30 to-day.—PETER.”

Then he ordered his carriage to be ready at twelve, as he had some serious cases he was obliged to visit before he left town, told Drummond to admit no patients after that time, and threw himself into his morning's work as well as Paul's telegram, which kept ringing in his ears, would allow him to do.

Had he made a mistake in administering even so small a dose of opium to a patient with a weak heart?

This was what troubled him ; it never once occurred to him that there had been any mistake in making up the pills ; and it worried him, for he was a proud man, and the bare possibility of having made such an error of judgment humiliated him keenly. It was most inconvenient to him to go down to Eastfolk again ; he would have to disappoint several patients, lose some fees, and give himself extra work on his return ; but he was so anxious to solve what was to him at present a mystery, that he willingly made the tedious journey to satisfy his curiosity, and if possible justify himself.

Miss Dursley received his telegram while Paul was on his rounds, and was not a little disturbed thereby, for Paul had meant to get the coroner to hold the inquest without calling Dr. Dursley down to attend it ; but, now that Peter had taken the law in his own hands, it would not be so easy to hide from him that the mistake was his own without violating truth.

Dorothy informed the coroner that Dr. Dursley wished to be present at the inquest, sending Fly to him with a note to that effect, for Paul had left that precocious imp at home in case of emergencies that morning ; and Fly came back in the middle of the day to say the inquest was to be at five that afternoon.

Mr. Dursley was no better pleased than Dorothy when he came in to find that Peter was coming to the inquest. They agreed he would be furious with them both for the mistake, and they sincerely wished he had kept in London.

“Don't bring him here, Paul, for pity's sake ; I am such a bad hand at telling fibs, and he is sure to cross-question me if he comes ; take him to Eastwich and dine at the ‘Crown.’ And if he insists on coming here send me word he is coming, and I'll go out somewhere for the evening ; I can't face him.”

"Poor old Peter! I should rather enjoy hearing him raging at us for his own mistake if the victim were not Sir John Dane. He will be most angry with you for having destroyed his prescription, because that in his opinion would have put him beyond all reproach. I must not forget to take the prescription-book to show him the copy. But he will never get over your supposed carelessness in not preserving his fifty-guinea prescription."

"You will have an hour and a half with him before the inquest begins. Don't let him think there is time to come here and look for the prescription; tell him I have mislaid it if he suggests that."

"I most devoutly wish he was not coming, although there is much to talk over with him about my future course. Poor old Peter! It will be a joke, Dorothy, to hear him slanging me, when all the while he is the culprit. It will need the thought of losing Chloe to help me to keep my countenance," said Paul, who had a keen sense of humour, and loved nothing better than a practical joke except Chloe.

Luckily for the success of their plan to screen Peter, Paul did not take Fly with him when he went to meet his brother, for if that young monkey had heard their conversation he would certainly have informed them that he heard his mistress say "scruples" was the word written on the prescription, not "grains."

"Scruples! scruples! Twenty grains of opium in one pill, Paul! Why, Dorothy must have been clean, stark, staring mad! Twenty grains! It is downright criminal," said Dr. Dursley.

"I expect it is; but poor Dorothy no more knew she was making a mistake than you or I could have been capable of making such a blunder," said Paul, with an inward chuckle.

"You or I! Why, God bless me, an intelligent child ought to know better. And Dorothy, who has dispensed your medicines for the last ten years—and confoundedly lazy it was of you to allow her to do it"—continued Peter.

"It was," interrupted Paul. "However, I am going to pay the penalty now. I intend to take all the blame; of course I am responsible for the medicines she makes up, not Dorothy, and I don't mean her name to appear if I can possibly help it."

"But, my dear boy, it is ruin to you, utter ruin to all your prospects," remonstrated Dr. Dursley.

"I know. I have counted the cost. It will be imprisonment,

too, I expect ; they'll send the case for trial, no doubt," said Paul calmly.

"Merciful Powers ! What a mess we are in ! Thank goodness I came down. I'll make the post-mortem myself ; perhaps I shall find some other sufficient cause of death. If I do, will it be possible to hush this up ?"

"Quite impossible. I expect the whole neighbourhood is aware of it by now ; besides, the nurse knows as well as I do," said Paul.

"Does she know who made up the pills ?"

"She knows they were made up in my surgery, and that therefore practically it is my fault, which is all any one will ever get out of me on the subject," said Paul.

"But suppose the jury bring it in manslaughter against you, with a sentence of imprisonment ; have you thought of that possibility ?"

"Yes ; I shall go to prison in that case," said Paul calmly.

"No, you shan't. Look here, Paul, do you remember the oath we took when we were boys that if ever one of us was in any great trouble, the other would share it with him, as far as it was possible so to do ?"

"I had forgotten it, but we were children then, and did not know our greatest troubles must be borne alone," said Paul, thinking of Chloe, not of imprisonment.

"Our greatest, yes, but not necessarily all our troubles ; I can't, of course, take the bitterest part of this trial from you, I can't even share the loss of reputation and the professional ruin, but I can go to prison instead of you, thanks to the great likeness between us."

"Peter ! dear old boy ! explain," said Paul, the tears starting to his eyes to hear his brother planning so naively to take the punishment he little thought was due to his own carelessness.

"Why, if you were clean-shaven, it would be impossible for any one, except perhaps Dorothy and my children, to tell us apart, and you are such an excellent mimic, you could take my place in London ; the greater part by far of my patients are strangers, whom I never see but once, many of the others only from time to time, and being a consulting physician, I don't visit many in their own homes. I have no fear of any of them detecting you."

"And how about my capacity for prescribing for them?" asked Paul.

"I haven't any fear of that; you were always the cleverer fellow of the two, only you are so confoundedly lazy. As for new patients, you can diagnose their cases as well as I can, and for the others you will have the benefit of my diagnoses and notes and copies of the prescriptions."

"It would be a joke after my own heart, but what the deuce would you do in prison? You would go melancholy mad," said Paul.

"No, I should not. I should get on with the book I am writing on valvular disease of the heart, which I am too busy to spare time for now. It is a work that would engross and interest me so deeply, I should have no time to be dull even in prison. Besides, the thought that I was suffering in your place would keep me going. Imprisonment would be a ten times greater punishment to you, who live so much in the open air, than to me," said Dr. Dursley.

"Perhaps it won't come to imprisonment; perhaps it will be only a fine," suggested Paul.

"If it is I'll pay it, but I think we shall find it will be imprisonment, unless you confess that Dorothy made up the pills; your refusal to say who did it will go against you. At least, that is my private opinion, but it is possible we may be exaggerating the consequences. Of course the fact that we are so well known here will count immensely in our favour. What are you laughing at?"

"At your proposal. Egad, Peter, what a joke it would be for me, but such hard lines on you, though, that I don't think I can agree!"

"You shall, if it comes to the worst; and honestly I shall be glad of the rest and the quiet time to write my book."

"Well, we shall see what the verdict is, and then, if I am sentenced to six months' imprisonment, I may let you do half. We can think out the details of our plan between the inquest and the trial, if there is to be a trial, and I suppose there is not much doubt about that."

"None, I should say. The more I think of Dorothy's stupidity the less can I understand it. By the way, where is my prescription? Have you it with you?"

"I have the copy in my book; I'll get it directly we arrive:

we are close to the house. Dorothy lost your prescription after she had copied it."

"Zounds! What next? Dorothy meant to do the thing thoroughly. Is the woman in love, or what on earth has possessed her? Her stupidity is as deep-seated as the scepticism of Northern nations. Luckily for me, I can swear I wrote 'grains,' and not 'scruples,' or a pretty business it would be. Certainly Dorothy must be very dense or very careless."

"Oh! as for the prescription being lost, that is of no consequence; a great man like you is above suspicion," said Paul.

"Well, of course it is impossible I could have made such a mistake," answered Dr. Dursley complacently. "Here we are; we shan't get through this post-mortem by daylight if we don't look sharp," he continued as a groom took the horse, and he and Paul, each with a case of instruments, went into the darkened house. They had no time during the next few hours for conversation; first, they were engaged in making the post-mortem examination, and as soon as this was finished the coroner and his jury arrived to view the body, after which the two brothers adjourned to the inn, where the inquest was being held, to give evidence. Before they left the house, Paul received two notes, one from Miss Dane and one from Chloe: Augusta's letter was merely a few pencilled lines asking him to come in as soon as the inquest was over and begging him to bring Dr. Dursley with him to tell her the result; Chloe's was written in her masculine hand, so unlike the little fairy fingers that penned it, and sealed with "Chloe" in black sealing-wax.

It had no beginning, but ran as follows:—

"They tell me he was poisoned through your carelessness. Is this true? If so, oh! how dared you do what you did last night? Was it your fault? I must know, so much depends on my knowing. If it was your fault, I will never speak to you again. Never! never!! never!!! Oh! my darling dad, Chloe will never forgive your death if it was any one's fault. Answer this, for I must know the truth.

"CHLOE."

Paul read this piteous little note while Peter was giving his evidence; and having read it, he folded it carefully up and put it in his breast-pocket. It was the last note he ever expected to receive from Chloe. She was acting as he had feared she would,

and he could not blame her: if the poor child believed him to have carelessly, though accidentally, poisoned her father, how could she ever have anything more to do with him? Common decency would prevent her from becoming the wife of the man who had been the instrument of her father's death; and Chloe, who had idolized her father, would certainly never speak to him again.

He had known what Chloe would do before he opened her note, but, now that he saw it written in black and white, his heart sank within him, and he knew he had hitherto been buoying himself up with the vain hope she would act differently. Her verdict, however, was now in his pocket, and, with that there, he cared very little what the coroner's verdict would be; and his evidence did not tend to make it a favourable one, for he declined to say who made up the pills. All he would say was that he only was to blame for the unfortunate mistake, and that he accepted all the responsibility.

Dr. Dursley testified that he had prescribed one grain of opium for each dose, informed the jury that a scruple of opium was enough to kill ten men in Sir John's state; therefore it was quite impossible he could have prescribed it, regretted bitterly that his prescription had been destroyed, but considered the fact that it had been correctly copied into his brother's book would entirely exonerate him.

The coroner, who was most obsequious in his manner to the great doctor, agreed completely with this opinion, and instructed the jury to that effect; he was less respectful to Paul, whose refusal to say who actually made up the pills and whose determination to take the whole blame annoyed him visibly. He had known the Dursleys since they were children, and would willingly have hushed the matter up had it been in his power to do so, but Paul refused to abet him in this, and the jury, to the great anger of the coroner, brought in a verdict of "Poisoned through carelessness."

"Through whose carelessness?" asked the coroner.

"Mr. Dursley's," answered the foreman.

"Do you know this verdict obliges me to send the case before the magistrates?"

"We do."

"Then I have nothing to do but to send it, though it is my

own opinion that Mr. Dursley is screening some one else. No medical man could have made such a mistake," said the coroner as he closed the proceedings, in a very bad temper.

It was then seven o'clock, so the brothers hurried to Bilney Hall to obey Miss Dane's summons before driving to Eastwich to dine and catch the night mail back to London, by which Dr. Dursley intended to return. He would fain have sent an excuse to Augusta, but Paul was hoping to catch a glimpse of Chloe, and they both felt bound, under the sad circumstances, to accede to any wishes of Sir John's daughters, though, if Peter had had the remotest idea why Augusta had requested to see him, he would certainly have hesitated to accept the invitation.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW CHLOE BORE IT.

THE whole world is changed to a man or a woman after committing a first crime ; the whole world is also changed to him or her who is called upon to bear either a great sorrow or a great joy. The whole world was changed to Chloe Dane when she opened her eyes upon it the morning after her father's death, for she found herself face to face with a terrible sorrow and also with a scarcely less terrible joy. She went to sleep a child, she woke a woman, for she had realized neither the joy nor the sorrow until she had slept upon them, and hand in hand they greeted her the next morning. Contrasts of light and shade seemed to be a part of Chloe's destiny, as well as of her outward appearance. In most lives joy and sorrow ultimately balance each other, but they seldom occupy the scales simultaneously, as they now did in Chloe's case. Had Sir John died a natural death, the scales would have been equally weighted ; but the fact that Paul was the instrument, as she was soon to learn, of her father's death, overbalanced them, and the side of sorrow went down so low that joy's scale was in danger of being emptied entirely.

This, however, did not happen until she met her sisters, and learnt the whole sad truth. At first she remembered only two things : love and death—Paul's love, Sir John's death. The knowledge of one had followed the other almost as quickly as the thunderclap follows the lightning's flash. As soon as she was dressed she crept into her father's room and flung herself

on the floor by his bedside, where he lay with covered face, and there she burst into a storm of weeping.

She was interrupted by Augusta informing her that the gong would not be sounded, but that it was time for prayers.

"I am not coming to prayers. Dad is dead ; I have nothing to pray for," said Chloe, rising and, to Augusta's horror, taking her violin out of the room with her.

"I cannot understand Chloe ; her paganism is only surpassed by her uncontrolled emotions. She appeared paralyzed with grief just now, and yet she is actually gone to practise on her violin while we are at prayers," said Miss Dane to her sisters as she entered the breakfast-room.

"I think we must let Chloe bear her sorrow in her own way ; it is far worse for her than for us : she and he were everything to each other. He never cared very much for us," said Bertha kindly, her lips quivering at her last words, for she was warm-hearted, though too shy to show it, and had loved her father more than he or any one else suspected, unless Chloe had divined it.

"Let us hope this trial may have a chastening effect on her unbridled nature ; sorrow often has most beneficial results. We must pray hopefully that it may be so in Chloe's case," said Constance as the servants filed in to prayers.

Meanwhile Chloe had taken her violin up into an attic, far away from Sir John's room, and eased her soul of some of its burden by playing an impromptu of her own composition. Music soothed her as nothing else could ; in anger, in sorrow, in her wildest moods, her violin always calmed her, and in a quarter of an hour she went down to breakfast, comparatively resigned after her outburst of grief.

At the close of the meal Augusta remarked that the nurse had told her there was to be an inquest, and consequently a post-mortem.

"There shan't be either ; I won't allow it," said Chloe. "He died because that stupid Dr. Dursley gave him opium. I wish he had never been called in. Paul—Mr. Dursley, I mean—understood him much better. It was the opium pill that killed him. I heard Mr. Dursley say so ; so there is no need to have an inquest."

"Yes, there is, Chloe. Father died of an overdose of opium.

There was a mistake made in his pills: ten times more than Dr. Dursley ordered was given him," said Constance.

"It was in no way Dr. Dursley's fault. He is perfectly exempt even from a suspicion of indiscretion," said Augusta, a slight flush mounting to her freckled cheeks, why or wherefore no one knew.

"What do you mean, Constance? A mistake in his medicine? Do you dare to say Dad was poisoned?" said Chloe, quivering with excitement as she seized Constance's sleeve and stared at her with her great black eyes.

"Dear Chloe! don't be so impetuous; you are tearing my dress," said Constance.

Chloe stamped her foot, put her little hands up to her head, and clutched her short curls, and said something about Constance's dress which she had heard her father say when annoyed, and which was greeted by Augusta with horror and by Constance with pained surprise. Chloe did not always talk like a book, as Augusta was said to do.

"Well, the idea of minding your sleeve being torn at such a moment! You'll drive me mad, you will, you two! Was my father poisoned? and if so, who did it? Answer me, some of you!" exclaimed Chloe.

"Chloe, dearest, it was all an accident and a terrible mistake, but it was no one's fault that our father had too much opium given him," said Bertha gently, kneeling down by Chloe's side and putting her arm round her.

Chloe, who a moment before had looked like a little fury, was touched by Bertha's sympathy, and flinging her arm round her sister's neck, burst into a fit of hysterical tears.

"Try and control yourself, Chloe; it won't be so hard to bear then," said Constance.

"I am sorry you are so undisciplined——" began Augusta, but the shy, gentle Bertha could not stand any more of this, and, to the amazement of her sisters, she rose to her feet and, as she led Chloe to a sofa, said:

"Do go away, Augusta and Constance. You would provoke a saint, and the child really can't bear much more. Send nurse to us; I won't allow Chloe to be worried and lectured to-day."

The elder Miss Danes obeyed their younger sister from sheer astonishment, and left her, and sent the nurse to explain the sad

circumstances of Sir John's death to his poor little daughter. Undisciplined, as Augusta had said, the child certainly was, but she was called upon to bear a trial under which an older person and a stronger nature might have broken down.

The nurse and Bertha both did their best to exonerate Mr. Dursley from all blame, but Chloe seemed to take a delight in torturing herself by blaming him.

"It was his fault ; I don't care what you say, or what the judge and the jury, and the coroner, and the newspapers, and the magistrates say, or what anybody else says. It was his fault ; if he did not make up the pills himself, he ought to have done so : and I'll never forgive him for killing my darling dad, never, never. Don't begin about Christians forgiving injuries, Bertha ; I am only a pagan, as Augusta is always saying ; and pagans don't forgive, and I don't forgive Mr. Dursley. Oh ! it will kill me ; I am sure it will," and Chloe sobbed again pitifully.

"I wish you were not quite so bitter against Mr. Dursley," said Bertha later when they were alone, and Chloe was calmer.

"Bitter ! I hate him, and I hate myself worse than I hate him. Bertha, what do you think ? I actually let him kiss me last night ; I did, indeed," said Chloe, who felt it was some ease to her little soul to make this confession.

"But, Chloe dear, I don't think you should have done that ; you have not known him very long."

"Long enough for him to love me, and for me to—to—to hate him. Oh ! Bertha, it seems loathsome now, when I think of it, but it—it did not seem loathsome last night," said Chloe naively.

"But are you engaged to him, then, Chloe ?" asked the somewhat bewildered Bertha.

"Thank goodness, no ; I made no promises, and if I had, they would not be binding, now I know the truth."

"I don't think we do know the truth. I don't believe it was Mr. Dursley's fault ; I believe he is screening some one else," said Bertha.

"Then he ought to tell me. I have the right to know, and if he does not confess to me that he is innocent, I shall believe he is guilty. I'll give him one chance : I'll write to him and ask him to tell me the truth."

And then Chloe wrote the little note which Paul received towards the close of that long day, which seemed almost inter-

minable to poor little Chloe, who spent a great part of it between Sir John's room and the attic, either sobbing her own heart out by his bedside, or tearing the heart out of her fiddle in the garret. Her sisters took Bertha's advice, and left her alone with her dead ; Chloe was unlike other people at all times, so it was perhaps only natural she should be still more unlike them at such a time as this. And Chloe's moral equilibrium was more disturbed than her two elder sisters were aware of. They did not know that love as well as grief was raging within her, first love in all its sweetness, plus a bitterness that was as intense as the sweetness, which it could not entirely neutralize.

The experience of the three elder Miss Danes in the affairs of the heart had been limited to a mild flirtation on the part of a curate with Constance, which had never developed into anything more serious than the presentation of a volume of his own sermons. They were very serious indeed. They were called "Steps to the Altar," but they did not lead to matrimony. They subdued Constance's cheerfulness for six months, by which time she must have known them by heart, and then the curate became a rector, and his place at Bilney knew him no more.

Neither did Constance.

Miss Dane was one of those unfortunate women—we believe they are very rare—who have never had a lover, nor had Bertha, for that matter, but Bertha was only twenty-eight, and as she had some lovable traits in her character, it was quite possible she might live to have one, particularly as she never expected anything of the kind, and it is the unexpected which happens.

Augusta had expected to be married, and was secretly sorely disappointed that she was not ; she attributed it entirely to want of opportunity and to the somewhat secluded life they led, though that had not prevented Chloe from having more admirers than she could count on the fingers of both hands.

When Dr. Dursley arrived to see Sir John, and it transpired that he was a widower, and furthermore had just accepted a baronetcy, that he was one of the leading London physicians, enjoying a large income, it occurred to Augusta that he was not an undesirable husband. She preferred the clerical profession to the medical ; but when gilded by the sheen of a title, enriched by a large income, and enhanced by the fame and popularity of a fashionable London physician, the position occupied by Dr.

Dursley, soon to be Sir Peter Dursley, seemed to rank at least with a dean's, if inferior to that of a bishop. And there were not any bachelor bishops among Augusta's acquaintance.

So when Dr. Dursley was summoned to Bilney, *he* came, Augusta saw, and *he* conquered Augusta's heart. Unfortunately, though he came, he did not see, for he never so much as looked at Augusta. The only one of the three elder Miss Danes whom he can be said to have seen on his first visit to Bilney was Bertha, whose voice and manner struck him as remarkably pleasant.

Bertha was blissfully unconscious that the great doctor even noticed her presence, whereas Augusta flattered herself that, unless she had made some impression on him, he would not have come down for the inquest.

To reward him for his trouble, she was determined he should not leave without seeing her, so she sent the note to Paul which resulted in the visit of the two brothers after the inquest.

Only Augusta and Constance were in the drawing-room when the doctors arrived, but Peter, looking at his watch, requested that the others and the nurse might be sent for at once, as he had only a short time to spare, and it was desirable they should be present. Why it was desirable he did not explain; perhaps he could not; perhaps he unconsciously wished to see Bertha again: certainly he wished Paul and Chloe to meet.

Chloe came in with a large wreath in her hand which she was making of exquisite white flowers, Bertha followed with more flowers, ferns, wire, and scissors, and the two sat down together after Bertha had shaken hands with the brothers, and Chloe greeted them both with equally formal bows.

Then Peter, standing with his back to the fire, and his hands behind him, surveyed the bereaved daughters, while Paul in an undertone told the nurse the result of the post-mortem and inquest, till Peter's voice silenced him:

"Dear ladies, I should like to convey to you a few words of deepest sympathy in the terrible calamity which has overtaken you—I may say *us*, for I feel I am to some extent responsible for what has happened, but at such seasons words are of little use. I pass on therefore to a few painful facts, which I wish to lay before you. I prescribed an opium pill, containing one grain of opium, for the late Sir John; by some incredible carelessness, the person who made up the pill put in twenty grains, or one

scruple, of opium, with the fatal result we all deplore. The dispenser mistook a grain for a scruple, and when I tell you two grains of opium is a full dose for a man, you will understand what a terrible blunder it was."

"But who made it?" interrupted Chloe, throwing down the wreath and leaning forward with her great eyes wide open.

"That I am not at liberty to say. My brother here is of course responsible, as the pills were sent out from his surgery, but——"

"But I am the culpable person. The jury have brought in a verdict which practically amounts to manslaughter against me; and I shall appear before the magistrates next week to answer the charge," interrupted Paul.

At the word "manslaughter" Chloe uttered a low, moaning cry, like that of some wounded animal, and no one present would have been surprised had she fainted or gone into violent hysterics; indeed, the nurse, Bertha, and Dr. Dursley rather expected it: but Chloe never did what was expected of her.

Now she pulled herself together with a great effort of self-control, rose to her feet, and walking across the room, faced Paul, who was standing by the side of his brother, and said in a low but clear and imperious tone:

"Did you make up that pill?"

"I am responsible," said Paul sadly.

"That is no answer to my question; I have the right to ask and to know: you know I have. Did you make it up?"

"I cannot answer," said Paul, without daring to look at his questioner.

"You shall answer, Paul Dursley. I must know; I will know. Tell me directly," said Chloe, speaking very quickly, as she always did when angry.

"Forgive me, Chloe; I cannot," said Paul, forgetting the presence of the others, as indeed Chloe also had done.

"And you dared to do what you did last night? I will never speak to you again, Paul Dursley, never till you come to me and say you did not poison my father. I don't believe you did it, but you ought to tell me the truth with your own lips," said Chloe in a low, impassioned voice.

"I cannot," said Paul as Chloe rushed from the room, her patience or her strength exhausted, and Bertha rose quickly and followed her.

"Manslaughter, Dr. Dursley? Did I understand your brother is to be tried for manslaughter? How very dreadful," said Augusta as the door closed on Bertha.

"Oh, but, Augusta, we must look on the bright side, and hope that Mr. Dursley will be acquitted, as no doubt he will, for of course it was an accident," said the ever-cheerful one.

"You are right, Miss Dane. Whether he is acquitted or not, it is a terrible trouble for us, for I need scarcely say I shall suffer as much as Paul inwardly; but he, poor fellow, has to bear loss of professional prestige in addition to all the rest," said Dr. Dursley.

"My career here as a doctor is finished. I intend to give up my practice, whatever the verdict may be, as soon as the trial is over. I shall make arrangements for my successor to come in on the day of the trial," said Paul, preparing to take his leave, for, now that Chloe was gone, he wished to get away from Bilney Hall as quickly as possible, and Peter guessing instinctively his brother's feelings, moved to Augusta to say good-bye.

"Must you go? I am so sorry for you. I hope we shall often meet again, Dr. Dursley. You will probably be down here for this dreadful business, and you must be sure and come and see us," said Augusta to the great doctor, who departed in sublime ignorance of the impression he had made upon the eldest Miss Dane.

Before the brothers separated that night it was arranged that Paul should go up to London the following week to engage counsel, and also to see as much as he could of Peter's home and professional life.

CHAPTER X.

THE TRIAL.

NEARLY three months intervened between Sir John Dane's death and Paul Dursley's trial. The case was just too late for the winter sessions, and had to be postponed till the spring. In this interim Mr. Dursley made frequent short visits to London, ostensibly to see his solicitor, but in reality to facilitate the change of places which he and his brother, now Sir Peter Dursley, proposed to make after the trial. He had been admitted to bail in his own recognizances of £200; the feeling in the

neighbourhood was very strong in his favour, and the unanimous opinion among his friends and acquaintance was that he was screening Miss Dursley, who, it was well known, made up his medicines.

It soon oozed out that he intended to give up his practice, a step his patients all regretted, for he was not only very popular, but he was also very highly thought of; and if some of the glory of Peter's fame was reflected on him he also shone by his own light.

He made the acquaintance of Dr. Crofton a week or two after Sir John's funeral, and it was arranged that he should take charge of the practice from the first day of the trial for six months, with a view to buying it, if he wished to do so, at the end of that time. It was further settled that he was to live in Paul's house, and Miss Dursley was to remain there during Paul's imprisonment if he were condemned, so that she might be near him and able to visit him when allowed to do so. If he were acquitted he meant to go to Paris for some months until the sale of the practice was effected. In either case Miss Dursley was to keep house for the six months of probation for Dr. Crofton; but as she and he could not live alone, Peter's children, with a governess, were to be sent down to her. Six months of country air would be most beneficial to them, and, moreover, it was quite necessary for the success of the doctors' intention to change places with each other to get the children, especially Nona, out of the way.

There was one person Dr. Dursley thought it would be absolutely necessary to take into their confidence; that person was Drummond.

"In the first place, he would find it out for himself if we did not tell him, and in the next he will be of so much use to you; he can tell you almost as much about the patients as I can, not of course from a professional point of view. He knows with whom I am intimate, what invitations I should be likely to accept, which, by the way, are few in number; in fact, we can't get on without Drummond. I can't, and I am certain you would not be able to deceive him," said Sir Peter to his brother.

Accordingly it was agreed that Drummond should be taken into his master's confidence before he went down to Eastwich for the trial. Indeed, Paul's habit of smoking, unless he gave it up,

would have betrayed him at once to Drummond, whose real master never smoked.

Dr. Dursley was rather fond of his club, and since his wife's death frequently dined there, and played whist in the evening ; it was the one recreation he cared for, and he was a very good player. Paul did not care for cards, but played billiards, whereas Peter never went into the billiard-room.

During Mr. Dursley's visits to London the brothers often dined at the club, and Dr. Dursley pointed out most of the members to Paul, and introduced him to his friends ; but they both felt the club would be one of their greatest difficulties, and Paul's greatest triumph if he succeeded in taking every one in whom he met there.

It was the opinion of Mr. Dursley's counsel that if the jury found him guilty the sentence would not be a heavy one, as all the evidence went to prove that, though responsible for the mistake, Dursley had not actually made it himself, for the fact that Miss Dursley dispensed his medicines could not be withheld; much as Paul desired to withhold it. All that he could obtain was that Dorothy should not be subpoenaed as a witness if it could possibly be avoided, and as Fly was only too willing to testify that she had made up the pills, it would probably not be necessary.

Fly was so anxious to prove his master's innocence, that he had fully made up his mind to make a dramatic entry into the witness-box on his own responsibility if he were not called to give evidence. When his subpoena arrived his delight expressed itself in a series of somersaults, turned in the stable yard for the groom's benefit, as a tribute to the proudest moment of his life.

"Have you ever been a witness, James?"

"Oh, Lor', and that I have, to plenty of wickedness, too," said James.

"But you never gave evidence in a court of justice, as I am going to in our trial."

"Mind you tell the truth for once in your life, or you'll be took up for perjury."

"I shall mind I tell the truth ; but there is one thing I don't mean to tell, though I knows it, and that is the whole of the truth, and all your horses should not drag it out of me."

James' answer was to throw a halter round Fly's neck, with

the encouraging remark that he would want it one day, as sure as he was a groom.

On the day before the trial Mr. Dursley went up to London, and returned late the same evening with his *locum tenens*, Dr. Crofton, and with Sir Peter. He went up to town with his beard and moustache; he returned clean-shaven, so that when he entered the house Dorothy mistook him for Peter.

"Hulloa, Dorothy, you have never mistaken us before; I am Paul. Peter is behind, and this is Dr. Crofton. Crofton, this is my sister, who is to be your hostess; she can tell you all about the people here; she has lived in this house ever since she was born."

Dr. Crofton, who was a small, plain, delicate-looking man, with reddish beard and whiskers, grey eyes, and a somewhat sad expression, bowed, and favouring Dorothy with a brief, but keen, glance, left it to her to begin the acquaintance. She did so by hoping he would be happy at Lyneham and promising to do all in her power to make him comfortable.

"Yes, you are in good hands, Crofton. Dorothy is an excellent housekeeper, and has the knack of making every one happy; I can answer for that. Crofton likes children, especially Peter's young fry, so you need have no anxiety on that score, Dorothy," said Paul, for Dorothy had been rather nervous on this point.

The children and their governess, a Miss Sanders, had arrived a few days ago, and, with the exception of Nona, were quite settled in their new home.

"Why have you shaved your beard off, Paul?" asked Dorothy as they all sat down to supper.

"To save the prison authorities the trouble if I am sent to gaol."

"But they don't shave prisoners now, I believe; and, at any rate, you might have waited till after the trial. I can't think how you could have been so foolish. Peter, why did you let him do it?"

"My dear Dorothy, I could not prevent it."

"I should have prevented it had I known. It is most foolish; he will catch cold, and if I am not with him to look after him he will have inflammation of the lungs. I really wonder you had not more sense, Paul," said Dorothy.

"I wonder if Nona will mistake me for her father; we shall see to-morrow morning," said Paul.

Dr. Crofton, who appeared to be a very silent man, made no remark ; but though he was inclined to agree with Miss Dursley, he could not help wondering if she would look after him as efficiently as she seemed to look after her brother, and decided that if she did the peace of the household would be disturbed, for he was not a good-tempered man, nor was he disposed to brook any attempt at petticoat government.

He retired soon after supper, but the brothers sat up till the small hours talking after Dorothy had gone to bed ; they did not intend her to know of their scheme of changing places, unless by any chance she found it out for herself, and then they knew they could trust to her discretion not to betray them.

They appeared at breakfast the next morning dressed exactly alike, and as they stood on the hearthrug talking the likeness was so striking that Miss Dursley was startled by it.

"Well, I do know one from the other, but, really, I doubt if any one else would. Your face looks so much thinner now you are clean-shaven, Paul, and all the worry of this trial has pulled you down, so that you look as pale as Peter. Here comes Nona. Now let us see if she knows her father from her uncle," said Miss Dursley as Nona danced into the room, eager to see Sir Peter.

The child looked for a few moments at the two men as they waited to see what she would do, and then ran to her father, and held up her little hands to pull his face down to her.

"How did you know which was father, Nona?" said Paul.

"By the smile in his eyes when he looked at me ; but you are 'zactly alike ; so are your watch-chains, and your ties, and all your things to-day, only there is one difference : Daddy wears a wedding-ring on his little finger, and you don't. Paul would know him by that, but I went by his eyes," said Nona proudly.

No one was inclined for much breakfast that morning, so the meal was a short one ; and almost immediately after the brothers and Miss Dursley started for Eastwich, taking Fly, who was, in his own opinion, the most important witness in the case, with them.

As Sir Peter drew on his gloves, Nona, had she been there, would have noticed he had no wedding-ring on either of his hands.

When they reached the court the brothers separated. Mr. Dursley surrendered to his bail, and afterwards appeared in the

dock; while Sir Peter and Dorothy were accommodated with seats near the judges, one of whom was a personal friend of the great doctor's.

The case did not last long. Mr. Dursley pleaded guilty to the charge of manslaughter, and his counsel did not deny that his client was morally responsible for the mistake, but he called upon Miss Dursley and Fly to prove that she had made up the medicine and pills; and, therefore, he argued Mr. Dursley was exonerated from all blame, since Miss Dursley had dispensed his medicines for years, and had never before made a mistake.

Unfortunately for Paul, the counsel for the prosecution did not take this view. He argued that if Mr. Dursley had allowed an unqualified person to dispense his medicines for years, all the more blame to him, and the sooner such practices were put a stop to the better for his patients. Some amusement was created when Fly appeared in the witness-box and stated that he was Mr. Dursley's "buttons," that his duties were to wash the bottles, clean the surgery, and take round "our medicines." He remembered the day when Sir Peter Dursley was called down to see Sir John Dane. He knew he wrote two prescriptions, one for some physic and one for some pills.

"Do you remember who made up the pills?"

"Rather; we did ourselves," said Fly.

"Whom do you mean by 'we'?"

"Miss Dursley and myself."

"Do you mean to say that you actually helped to make the pills?"

"I mean to say I handed missus the drugs, as I always do. I knows 'em all as well as she does herself, and she never made a mistake in her life."

"She made a grave mistake on this occasion."

"I ain't so sure of that. I didn't deliver those pills," said Fly, with such an air of importance that a burst of laughter, immediately quelled by the judge, greeted the words.

"Who delivered them?"

"Sir John's groom fetched them."

"And you think that fact affected the pills?"

"I think the pills affected the patient, and I don't think it was our fault, either."

"Don't be impertinent. You can stand down."

Fly's observation about the groom led to the recall of the nurse by the counsel for the prosecution to prove that the parcel of medicine arrived intact, and had not been tampered with on the way.

The jury after a very brief deliberation brought in a verdict of guilty against Mr. Dursley, but added a rider to the effect that their unanimous opinion was that he was only to blame in so far as he had allowed an unqualified person to dispense his medicines, and they strongly recommended him to mercy.

The judge then made a short speech, and sentenced the prisoner to six weeks' imprisonment. Sir Peter then approached his judicial friend, and asked leave to accompany his brother to the prison, to see what little comforts he would be allowed to send him, and obtained his request.

A little later the two brothers, accompanied by two policemen, left the court by a side door in a closed fly for Eastwich Castle, where Paul was to be confined. The two constables sat facing the two brothers, and when the fly drew up at Eastwich Castle Paul was sitting by the door nearest the prison, Peter on the other side. The constable in front of Paul got out first, and while the second policeman was in the act of descending Sir Peter followed close on his heels, and Paul slipped into Sir Peter's place, and remained there till he saw Sir Peter marching into gaol between the two policemen, who were not much on the alert, not fearing that their prey was likely to attempt to escape them.

So Sir Peter was introduced to the governor of the prison as his new prisoner Mr. Paul Dursley, surgeon, whose offence and sentence were duly reported and chronicled, and Paul was introduced as Sir Peter Dursley, the great London physician, and invited to lunch with the governor. He accepted the invitation, and obtained several indulgences for his brother, and then having visited Sir Peter in his cell and made a list of things to send in for his greater comfort, he took leave of the prisoner, and went into Eastwich to execute his commissions.

He thoroughly enjoyed passing himself off as Sir Peter Dursley to the Eastwich tradespeople, most of whom knew him well. Several of them remarked on the strong likeness between the brothers, and Mr. Dursley, who was an excellent mimic, affected ignorance of which were the best shops to go to for his purchases,

and asked the kind of questions a comparative stranger like Sir Peter would be apt to ask.

To his great delight, he took in all the shopkeepers he visited to admiration ; he cut several intimate acquaintances who were unknown to Sir Peter, and he stopped and talked to one or two others who mistook him for the great doctor. He had the pleasure of hearing himself talked of in very flattering terms by these good people, who, while most of them blamed him for not employing a qualified dispenser, all agreed that it was hard lines on him to be sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment in addition to the loss of professional prestige for one fatal mistake made by his sister.

"True, it is hard lines on poor old Paul, but we must remember the sentence is not for the mistake, but for his negligence in allowing my sister to dispense his medicines. As my friend the judge remarked, the wonder was not so much that Miss Dursley had made a mistake as that she had not made one before," said the real Paul, imitating Sir Peter's grave manner to a nicety.

He thoroughly enjoyed the fun of passing himself off as Sir Peter, but he reflected his task in London would be more difficult and require finer acting : here he was only disguising himself and imitating Sir Peter to people who were only slightly acquainted with him ; there he would have to personate the great doctor to people who were intimately acquainted with him, and would necessarily be frequently obliged to appear cognisant of topics of which he was supremely ignorant.

The danger of being detected only added a zest to the undertaking, and had it not been for the thought of Chloe, Mr. Dursley would have been in high spirits at the task before him.

Sir Peter's part was comparatively an easy one. All he had to do was to be his natural self, since the prison authorities knew neither brother ; so, as Dursley reflected, the great doctor's was at once the easier and the harder part.

Paul went up to London by the evening train. He decided to run the risk of being seen in a smoking-carriage in his new character, as there was not much probability of seeing any one on the journey who would know Sir Peter Dursley well enough to be aware that he did not smoke ; so at the first stopping-place he jumped into a smoking-carriage and lighted his pipe.

A fit of melancholy came over him as the train bore him

further and further from Chloe, whom he feared he had lost for ever, for he could never exonerate himself from blame in her eyes without inculpating the great doctor.

He sat thinking of Chloe and of all their past intercourse, their musical treats in Sir John's room, their little tiffs, their friendship, and last, but not least, the scene on the night of his death ; then he remembered Chloe's promise, given in fun it was true, but still given, to visit him if he were ever in prison, given when there was not the slightest likelihood that he would ever claim it of her. Now that she believed him to be in Eastwich Gaol, would she keep her promise ?

He hoped not, for if she did, not he, but Sir Peter, would benefit by it. The very thought was maddening ; why, he would cheerfully endure six weeks' imprisonment if Chloe would visit him only once during that time.

How foolish he had been to change with Peter. It was too late now, or he would have refused to have accepted his brother's offer on the mere chance of a visit from Chloe ; but it was some comfort to him to reflect that that chance was very remote : in all probability she would rightly consider that subsequent events had released her from her promise.

This being the case, he would certainly prefer being out of prison ; but he hoped if Chloe did keep her promise he would hear of it at once, and then he would try and devise some means of again changing places with the prisoner, though he was aware this would be exceedingly difficult to do.

Meanwhile he was nearing London, where Sir Peter's carriage would meet him, and he would enter the stage in his new character of the great doctor.

(To be continued.)

Undetected Crime.

MURDERS may be roughly divided into three classes : those the perpetrators of which are discovered ; others in which, although a crime is self-evident, guilt is never brought home ; and, finally, deaths as to which no suspicion of foul play ever arises. How numerous this third class may possibly be is painfully apparent when one realizes that even such a wholesale poisoner as Dr. Palmer, of Rugeley, although perhaps suspected by assurance companies, would never have been run to earth had he stopped short in his death-dealing career before killing his friend Cook. Another notable criminal named Wainwright, a leading contributor to the "London Magazine," and who is believed to have been the first to resort to strychnine, was certainly suspected, but fled to France. There he continued his evil practices, more than one sudden death being attributed to his fell agency. Finally, either afraid to remain longer in France, or perhaps thinking the past had been forgotten in England, he returned to his own land, where such was the doubt about the possibility of conviction for murder that he was tried for forgery and transported to Australia, where he died. Poison is probably the instrument in the majority of murders which are never suspected to be such, although we can recall several other methods by which an ingenious novelist has enabled the villain to lure his victim to a seemingly accidental death.

Some few years ago, during an inspection of the arrows from the South Seas in the United Service Museum, Whitehall, a visitor pausing before the poisoned weapons, stacked blade upwards, like billiard cues in a rack, lightly touched a Wourali tipped point, and remarked that it was very blunt. As would happen nine times out of ten, his companion mechanically imitated the action, when the other remarked, "I say, old man, supposing I wished to kill you and pushed your head against the point as if in joke, would your death ever be imagined to be a murder?" This suggestion ultimately found its way into fiction in the shape of a short story in *London Society*, by W. D. Hay

with the single difference that the scene of the murder was purposely laid in a City museum.

That the tremendous advance in medical science has rendered the work of the secret poisoner far more difficult now than it was even only half a century back goes without saying ; and it is really appalling to reflect on what a variety of methods the poisoner of former days had at his command which there was no means of detecting after death, even if foul play was thought to have been the cause. What some of the old Italian poisons of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were is as much a mystery to this day as is the secret of the composition of some of the most brilliant colours used by the early Italian painters, or the wonderful nature of the cement employed by the ancient Roman builders.

In the London National Gallery may be seen a portrait of Julian II. Apart from any historical interest in the man, the face is a very striking one, but it becomes still more so when we read how narrowly he escaped death at the dangerous table of his infamous predecessor in the Papal Chair, Alexander Borgia. The reader will be reminded perhaps of the elder Dumas' novel "Monte Christo," but truth is often stranger than fiction, and the story told by the novelist, even if exaggerated for the purposes of romance, describes but one black episode in a career of splendid wickedness. That the Borgias, father and son, were wholesale poisoners is undeniable ; but the Pope's daughter, the beautiful Lucretia, has found many an ardent writer to champion her innocence of any participation in the guilt of her father and brother. The fact remains that Alexander was poisoned at his own table. His son, Cæsar, although at death's door, came round, but for the short remainder of his violent life was covered with vivid red spots. It has been suggested by one of our leading specialists on ptomaines, Dr. A. C. Farquharson, that the deadly nature of the Borgian draughts was owing to a peculiar combination of arsenic and pig's blood. There is no doubt that contemporaneously with the wonderful strides of art and literature which distinguished the first two centuries of modern history the science of poisoning was in fearfully extensive use. In short, medical progress did not keep pace with the inventions of the professional poisoner, and if from time to time a Tofana was executed in Italy, a Marchioness of Brinvilliers

broken on the wheel in France, or a Lady Hungerford boiled to death in London, these detections and punishments simply tended to show that unknown agents of secret crime were only too common, and that the means at their disposal were beyond the ken and skill of "the barber surgeons" of those times. It was, in truth, only through the accidental death of her agent while at his diabolical work in his laboratory, and that, too, through one of his own experiments, that the lovely marchioness was found to have made away with her relatives for the sake of their money, after a preliminary test of the power of her drugs in the ward of a hospital which she visited on pretence of charity. Her letters to the chemist who made up these poisons were found in his den, and sent her to the terrible wheel.

English history unfortunately abounds in instances of undetected crime. Take, for example, the disappearance of Edward V. and his brother in the Tower. Their uncle Richard is generally credited with their deaths, the details of which are said to have been confessed by the actual assassins to Henry VII. But the mystery, as Horace Walpole points out, does not end here. If the confession was true, why were the remains not found? The skeletons of the two boys buried in Westminster Abbey as those of the two missing princes were only discovered in the reign of Charles II., after the lapse of nearly *two hundred years*! Froude, in his history of the Tudor period, makes out a terribly black case against Queen Elizabeth's favourite Leicester, not only in connection with the ill-fated Amy Robsart, but also as to the curious circumstances surrounding the sudden deaths of others against whom Leicester notoriously bore ill-will. Then in the next reign happened the famous poisoning of Sir Thomas Overbury in the Tower, revealed through the drunken blabbing of a druggist's assistant, who boasted of what he could tell about the great people in the land. The victim had been the friend and adviser of the upstart minion Lord Somerset, and when he protested against the latter's proposed adulterous marriage, he incurred the enmity of king and court. On a frivolous pretext he was flung into the Tower, where he was slowly done to death by the new countess, aided by her husband Somerset and a Mrs. Turner. Presents of poisoned game and wine were sent him by his "old friend" in pretended sympathy. Some considerable time elapsed before the truth leaked out, and the poisoners were

tried and convicted. The woman Turner was hanged in her starched ruffle and cuffs, and from that day starch went out of fashion until the present century. As for Somerset and his wife, they were reprieved and banished to their country seat, and the dark motive which compelled King James to spare the guilty pair remains a mystery up to now. It will be noticed that here, as in the case of the Marchioness of Brinvilliers, *detection followed crime* ; but it must be borne in mind that the judicial investigations in each case revealed such wholesale traffic in poisons and such widespread scandals in high life that both the French and English authorities shrank from further inquiry.

Under Charles II. the nation went mad over the fictitious Popish plot. The first information about this infernal concoction of Oates and his fellow-perjurers was laid before a London magistrate named Sir E. Godfrey, who was noted for his Protestant zeal. Shortly afterwards Godfrey's body, with a small sword sticking in it, was found on Hampstead Heath. The deed was, of course, attributed to the Papists, and the Protestant mob went madder than ever. Oates was likely enough at the bottom of the affair, but it was never solved, and scores of innocent Catholics suffered for a conspiracy which never existed.

One of the most extraordinary stories of undiscovered crime in this country is that of the death of Sir John Lomb, who early in the last century founded the first modern silk mill in England. He was a young partner with his brother, but, in order to find out the secrets of the Italian manufacturers, he went to Italy, mastered the language, and obtained work as a native in one of the silk factories. There he made surreptitious drawings of the machinery, and finally, with the connivance of a friendly priest, escaped to England, set up a silk mill at Derby, made a fortune, and received knighthood. The revengeful Italians, however, never forgave nor forgot. Years went by, until one day the prosperous Sir John was poisoned through the instrumentality of an Italian woman, sent over for the express purpose. In this case the criminals escaped.

Coming down to a much later period, we find a great apparent augmentation in the amount of undetected murders, but this is perhaps owing to the enormously rapid growth of the population and the increased high pressure of life, the evils of which are borne witness to nowadays by a public press with ramifi-

cations extending to every corner of the three kingdoms. In former times many a village tragedy or strange disappearance remained a local mystery, and speedily passed into a tradition of the country-side or into entire oblivion. A cheap press has changed all this, and directly some gruesome occurrence is revealed the details are flashed and printed throughout the land.

In France, during the height of the Revolutionary period, occurred the robbery of the Lyons mail, when the coach was stopped, and murder and pillage followed. Long since the story was dealt with at length in the pages of "Chambers' Miscellany." Subsequently Sir Henry Irving was thanked by the descendants of the man who is said to have been wrongly convicted and guillotined. The play, which pictures the extraordinary danger of being a murderer's *double*, has been acted again and again on the theory that an innocent man was beheaded. Various governments have also paid compensation to his descendants; and yet the fact remains that the conviction has never been legally reversed, and that the murdered courier's descendant (a well-known French novelist) has written a book to prove that there was no error of justice.

Late in the year 1811 all England was startled by the Marr murders. In De Quincey's "Murder a Fine Art" we have a thrilling account of these and the tragedies which followed. A draper named Marr lived with his wife and baby in a house in Ratcliff Highway. There were also dwelling with them an apprentice lad and a young servant-girl, both treated as members of the family. The girl was sent out one foggy night to buy some oysters. She lost her way and returned unsuccessful to the door at eleven to find all shut, dark, and silent. Listening for an answer to her knock, she heard stealthy steps in the passage, and, already nervous with her mishap, she sprang back and called "Murder!" A blacksmith next door, with that "two o'clock in the morning courage" which the great Duke of Wellington said was one of the rarest things in the world, promptly gripped a poker, and in his nightshirt scaled the garden wall at the back and entered the Marrs' dwelling by an open door. There he found husband, wife, apprentice, and baby smashed to death with a shipwright's hammer which the assassin had left behind. A few days later, and a few doors away, a similar thing

happened. An old respectable couple kept an alehouse. There was also a servant-girl, and on the night in question a baby was sleeping in a cot upstairs, whilst in the next room was a journeyman baker who had gone to bed early in order to get to his work in the morning. At eleven, or thereabouts, the baker heard the side door slam, and at once "something told him the Marr murderer was at work." The baker crept downstairs, and leaning over the banisters, saw a stranger ransacking the back parlour. The landlady and servant lay dead in the room. As for the husband, he was stretched a corpse at the foot of his cellar steps. The baker crept upstairs again, hastily converted the bed-clothes into a rope, which he fastened to a bedpost; then he lowered himself from the window through the dense fog on to the street pavement. The alarm was given, and in a few seconds Ratcliff Highway was a sea of humanity on the keenest of hunts: a man-hunt. The front door was burst open. The foremost rushed upstairs, and there by the baby's cot stood the murderer. In a second he had sprung through the window, followed in mad chase by two or three of the pursuers. The latter lost their footing in the wet clay, and the fugitive escaped in the darkness. The baby was fortunately safe and sound. Next day a man was arrested in a sailors' lodging-house near the Tower. He hanged himself in prison before trial, and by a grim coincidence his skeleton, with the stake which used to be driven through the body of a suicide, was found during the height of the Whitechapel murders, when a roadway in the neighbouring Minories was undergoing repair. One cannot help thinking that Dickens in his tale of *Oliver Twist* when describing the ghastly end of Bill Sikes had De Quincey's weird narrative in his mind's eye.

In the early thirties the columns of that pioneer of illustrated journalism "*The Penny Magazine*" had a most interesting account of Casper Hauser. He was found and caught by a hunting party as a lad living the life of a wild animal in a German forest. Tamed and well educated, he developed remarkable intellectual powers, and when nearing manhood began, curiously enough, to recall memories of early childhood more vividly day by day. This was widely talked of, and it was rumoured that he was the son of some high personage. At all events, some person or persons grew alarmed when it was known

that he was committing these recollections to writing. One evening the servant told him a stranger was waiting with a letter at the garden-gate. Presently he was found stabbed to death, and the visitor had disappeared. No clue was ever found as to the real birth of the victim or the motive for his assassination, but the whole narrative suggests some dark intrigue.

In comparatively recent times the corpse of Sadler, the Irish M.P., banker, forger, and member of the ministry to boot, was supposed to have been found on Hampstead Heath, with an empty bottle which had contained prussic acid lying close by. But, strange to say, it was positively asserted that Sadler had been seen at Liverpool since his supposed suicide. Thus the rumour got about that Sadler had poisoned his *double* and escaped beyond the seas. At all events, this extraordinary idea found many believers, has never been quite upset, and forms the foundation of Joseph Hatton's novel, "John Needham's Double." With regard to the shooting of Lord Leitrim some years ago the truth of the popular rumour seems beyond all doubt. The crime was not agrarian, but an act of vengeance for sensual indulgence of a kind very similar to that which used to be known in France as *le droit du Seigneur*. But the murderers have never been brought to justice, and will probably carry their secret to their graves.

The last twenty years or so have been terribly fertile in unsolved tragedies. We need only allude to those known as the Bravo, York Road, Great Coram Street, Shooter's Hill, and Ardlamont mysteries, not to mention the numerous cases of child murder of a class more revolting than even the exploits of the Whitechapel fiend. Perhaps the most famous of the above ghastly series was the murder of Harriet Buswell in a house on the south side of Great Coram Street during the night of Christmas Eve, 1872. To this day the tragedy is often talked of, perhaps the more so because of other equally mysterious affairs which happened afterwards in the vicinity, such, for example, as the Burton Crescent murders in 1878 and 1884. There was, indeed, much to startle London and strike the imagination about the Great Coram Street tragedy. Whilst the Christmas bells were ringing her knell the poor woman had her throat cut from ear to ear, and the midnight assassin escaped in the grey of the winter morning. The dramatic horror of the thing and the swift

vanishing beyond ken of the miscreant would furnish ample weird material for the pen of a Gaboriau or a Stevenson. The man *was seen before and after* the deed, but under circumstances unfavourable for identification. In the first instance, it was in the dimly lit hall of the house the night of the murder. It is related that early the following morning a young servant-girl had risen betimes to get through with her work with the prospect of a holiday. She was employed at a house on the opposite side of the street to the one which was the scene of the crime. Whilst busy with the front door steps she saw a man come out from the door opposite. Eager to finish her task, she took little notice of him, and it was perhaps well for her that she was so preoccupied.

That time may reveal much is shown by such stories as that on which James Payne's novel, "Lost Sir Massingberd," is founded, and by the fact that the identity of the spy who betrayed Lord Edward Fitzgerald in Dublin as far back as the eve of the great Irish rebellion of 1798 was only proved three or four years ago. Then, again, take the disappearance of Lord Lovel, who, flying from the battlefield of Stoke in 1487, was last seen swimming the Trent. More than two hundred years later some alterations were being made in an old manor-house in Oxfordshire which had formerly belonged to the Lovels. A small room behind a large, old-fashioned fireplace was discovered, and in this secret chamber were found a skeleton and arms and armour of a kind which practically settled the question of the rebel lord's fate. Time works wonders, and who knows but that it may yet unlock some of the secrets we have mentioned, solve the problem of the Man with the Iron Mask, reveal, to the regret of school-boys, the lost books of Euclid, or uncover, to the delight of the Palestine explorer, the treasures of Lot?

When we turn to the Whitechapel atrocities, an interesting and little-known circumstance which happened lately is worthy of remark. A ship's fireman was captured in the early morning in Spitalfields just after stabbing a woman. A curiously shaped knife, the nature of the crime, the locality, and the hour alike prompted the supposition that the man might be the long-sought Ripper. The police tried hard to prove this, but sufficient evidence was not forthcoming. When the prisoner was brought up at the Central Criminal Court, the Recorder severely blamed

the framing of the indictment, which accused the prisoner of "feloniously wounding" instead of "attempted murder." This enabled the man to get off with ten years, but if the Whitechapel murderer and the convict are one and the same, it is a thousand pities the judge was prevented from sentencing him for life.

Those who have not read the "Confessions of a Thug," written by a well-known Indian officer, will hardly be able to understand what a vast organization of stranglers reigned unchecked for ages in India until suppressed by a governor-general within living memory. The Thugs mixed up the worship of the goddess Bowhnee with their pursuit of robbery and murder, lurking in wait at lonely spots by the roadside for pilgrims, traders, or soldiers returning home with their pay. But an empty pocket was little or no security for the traveller. Plunder was a secondary object with the stranglers, who, in adoration of their goddess, spared no wayfarer whose life was at their mercy. Thuggee was practically stamped out at last, although it may yet linger here and there in remote districts. The extension of British control and the active efforts of the police have effectually prevented any revival of the evil; but it is staggering to think what countless victims must have been sacrificed in the past before the Government took the stern steps it finally did.

An article on undiscovered crime would be incomplete without noticing the extraordinary prevalence of Vadhousm in the West Indies and on the West African coast. For a full account of this terrible cult we must refer the reader to the celebrated work on Hayti by Sir Spencer St. John, who tells of horrors so black and so secret that they would scarcely be credited if they came from a less known authority than that of Her Majesty's Consul-General. But the ghastly narrative of these midnight sacrifices of the "*goat without horns*" to the snake-god, of wholesale cannibalism even on bodies taken from the graveyard, and secret poisonings through the length and breadth of the island is told in detail not only by Sir Spencer St. John, but also by Froude and Captain Kennedy, and the horrible truth is known to every European or American consul in the place. Vadhousm exists more or less throughout the West Indies, and the Obee man or woman is dreaded by every black. There is indeed ample proof that the chief votaries of this frightful superstition have a profound knowledge of wonderful poisons and

antidotes quite unknown to European doctors. The late Canon Kingsley tells us, on the authority of a Trinidad magistrate, that an unwelcome visitor to one of the nocturnal "jumbo dances" held in the heart of a tropical forest was touched by the Obee man's hand and died in half an hour from a minute scratch, the poison being secreted under the murderer's finger-nail. But no conviction was possible at the time, and here it may be remarked that not so long ago the British Chief Justice of Sierra Leone said in open court that Vadhoulism was more powerful than the Queen's law. Even in one of the smaller of the British West Indian islands there exists a regular school of Vadhoulism, whilst in Hayti it flourishes as a powerful secret association, to which some of the highest of the governing classes belong. The African negro, if left to himself even under a so-called civilized government with an elaborate republican constitution, degenerates with astonishing rapidity into the lowest depths of barbarism, and in Hayti has converted one of the most beautiful islands of the Antilles into a hotbed of crime and vice so foul and horrid as to outdo the deeds of the worst of the pirates of the old days.

The subject of undetected crime is a wide one, and has been dealt with in a comprehensive way in the foregoing pages. Still no definite conclusion can be arrived at, except that the spirit of destruction which is said to be inherent in a dormant state in the human race is apt under peculiar conditions to develop into murderous activity, accompanied by motives of one kind or another or destitute of any prompting except a diabolical lust for blood. Perhaps the tigerish instinct of killing for the sake of killing which has been termed homicidal mania is a relapse into a phase of prehistoric animalism, a form of devolution such as seems to be at work among the tribes of the Congo. One thing appears certain, namely, that the proverb "Murder will out" holds absolutely good neither amidst the high civilization of Modern Babylon nor among the retrogressive blacks of Hayti.

The Romance of Alfreda's Engagement.

CHAPTER I.

"There was a sound of revelry by night."

"So, this is your first ball, Miss Capel, absolutely your *début* in society?"

"Yes, it's absolutely my first, my *very* first grown-up party—and," with a deep sigh, "it's more than half over. These lancers," with a nod of a bright young head, "sunning over" with wavy, chestnut-coloured hair, in the direction of the ball-room, "these lancers are '11,' and there only are twenty dances. More than half over"—very seriously—"and then my first dance will be over, and I don't suppose it will ever seem quite the same again."

"Oh, yes it will, Miss Capel. You haven't been to a dance in London yet. You haven't danced in the Scotch reel at the Caledonian, nor done a barn-door at the Guards, nor—oh, there are plenty of fresh experiences, Miss Capel, even for a young lady who has just made her *début* in Mildenhatch."

Captain Banbury twirls a very seriously-educated moustache, and glances curiously at the bright-eyed, white-robed *débutante* sitting beside him, upon a red baize covered seat placed in an angle of the stairs of the Town Hall. Captain Banbury is a captain in a polo-playing, final "g"-dropping, murderous-collar-wearing hussar regiment, whose officers are perforce doomed to marry heiresses or remain for ever single, the —th Hussars being "such a deucedly expensive regiment, don't you know." Captain Banbury's aunt, an ancient dame, toothless, and without a memory, resides at Mildenhatch, in the Manor House. Lady Banbury is lady of the manor; for the poor old Sir Charles, in a bath chair drawn by a white pony, is far less the lord of the manor than is Lady Banbury, driving in a colossal red-panelled landau drawn by fat grey horses, and driven by a fat, grey-haired coachman, pulling up in front of a tenant labourer's cottage to rebuke the hard-working labourer's still more hard-working wife for

not putting in an appearance at the recent mothers' meeting held at the Manor House. Lady Banbury had been Miss Fletcher, the daughter of a wealthy manufacturer, and had been a young woman of means, and these means she has at her disposal; otherwise, her ladyship's nephew by marriage, Captain Banbury, of the —th, would not be devoting three weeks to *ennui* and his aunt at the Manor House, Mildenhath. A butcher in Mildenhath under the immediate patronage of royalty would find that recommendation of far less importance among the custom of the neighbourhood than the possession of the magic passport of being recognised as purveyor to the Manor House. In the same manner, a grocer, urging upon an unwilling housekeeper mouldy cheese or highly-salted bacon, confronts her with the dead wall of argument, "Lady Banbury had some, ma'am, of this very bacon, and made *no* complaint." Therefore, the arrival of a relative of the great lady in the parish stirs the hearts of all the tradespeople with a thrill of local patriotism and conservative adoration of the great folk; and the hearts of the local, small, resident gentry beat with an enthusiastic desire to do *something* for "the nephew of the Manor House." Hence, is the bachelor ball given early in February instead of in the beginning of May. Hence, has Mrs. Capel, the vicar's wife, consented to allow Miss Alfreda Capel, eldest daughter of the vicar's tepid heart and shabby home, to make her *début* at a ball under the immediate patronage of Lady Banbury, the Honourable Mrs. Eccleston, the member's wife, Mrs. Palmer, the manufacturer's wife, &c., representing a long list of the local notabilities—dames with an exalted notion of the importance of Mildenhath as a whole and of themselves as a part of it.

Captain Banbury has asked his young partner if she has seen Hurlingham, to which she has answered "No;" has inquired if she takes much interest in polo, to which she is reluctantly bound to admit that she has never seen a match and knows nothing about it; and after nearly destroying Alfreda's mamma's second best fan, lent for the occasion, while he scans the delicate prettiness of the youthful colouring and outline of his partner's pretty head and shoulders, has been driven for conversation to return to Alfreda's own remark.

"So, this is your first dance; really now, that is interesting!"

"Is it? It was to me. Oh! how I longed for the day to

come, and now it's more than half over, much more than half over, now."

"I don't know about that, Miss Capel ; perhaps there will be extras."

"Will there ? How heavenly." Then with a sudden plunge into despondency—"but perhaps I shan't have partners !"

"Oh, yes, you will."

"But no one has asked me—yet, at least. No ! no one has asked me for any extras."

"How fortunate ; then I can have them all. May I, Miss Capel ?"

"Oh, thank you !" Alfreda is almost overcome with gratitude. To be asked for the extras—all of them at once—by the hero of the evening ! How shall she ever subdue her rapture sufficiently to look thoroughly ladylike, and at ease, and accustomed to parties as she has been endeavouring to appear all the evening ? and how fortunate that Charlie Hammond has not seemed to notice the distinction that has come upon her ! It is fortunate ; but that piece of good fortune does not last long. A tall, athletic-looking young man in well-worn, country made clothes, that contrast, Alfreda thinks, most unfavourably with her partner's fashionably-cut garments, appears at the head of the stairs, glances down the flight, catches sight of Alfreda and Captain Banbury seated side by side in the alcove, frowns slightly as he recognizes the couple, and setting his neck in his collar rather aggressively, slowly and stiffly descends the flight of red cloth covered stairs.

"Miss Capel, this is our dance, I think. The lancers are over and our waltz comes next."

Captain Banbury draws a white embroidered handkerchief out of a breast pocket, flicks an imaginary atom of dust from his patent leather dancing shoes, and, glancing upwards in a slightly careless and supercilious manner, says, "I think there is some mistake—er, Mr.—ah—"

"Mr. Hammond." Charlie looks most aggressive.

"Ah—Mr.—Hamilton—"

"*Hammond.*"

"Hammons, quite so—ah—as I was saying, Mr. Hammons, ah—there seems to be a mistake ; Miss Capel is engaged to me for this dance !"

"I don't think so, Captain Banbury. Miss Capel has promised me this dance, No. 12;" and, in proof of his statement, he produces a crumpled piece of shiny cardboard.

"Ah! certainly—" Captain Banbury fixes an immense round piece of plain glass in his right eye, with great caution, and then glances with the other at the card.

"Ah, certainly—'No. 12'—ah—Alfredah—who is Alfredah? I thought you said you were engaged to Miss Capel."

"So I am; her name is Alfreda."

Charlie looks appealingly at Alfreda, blushing and embarrassed. Charlie Hammond has always seemed to her such a nice young man, and she has always been pleased by his marked preference of herself over other girls, her friends, visitors at the Vicarage. Her girlish vanity has been gratified by the idea that she has had it in her power to make him get up at seven o'clock to row her and her sisters on the river, or to walk miles to get her particular ferns she has desired for her rockery, and even to refrain from all eccentric performances and impossible figures on the ice until she has become sufficiently at ease upon her skates not to clutch convulsively at his arms or hands or coat-tails. She had even felt a thrill of pleasure earlier in the evening when he had come smiling towards her as she entered the room, and asked her to reserve for him, among others, this very waltz now in discussion. She remembers her sensations at the moment, and wonders at them, but Captain Banbury had not then been introduced to her. She had thought of him as a "bright particular star," to be looked at by the many and danced with by the chosen few, and with the Honourable Mrs. Eccleston's three tall daughters in Bond Street dresses, Mrs. Palmer's nieces and party in Paris gowns and frocks made by the woman who designed trousseaux for the princesses; how could she hope, in her Mildenhath frock, which had seemed lovely until it ran the gauntlet of the Bond Street productions, how could she hope to be the one to attain to the unthought-of elevation of dancing with, sitting out with, and being helped to ices by, Captain Banbury, an officer in a cavalry regiment, a man whose temporary home was the Manor House?

Captain Banbury rises and bends his left arm towards Alfreda:

"This is our dance, I really believe, Miss Capel—unless, don't you know"—Captain Banbury laboriously turns round his head

within the narrow space allowed by an almost wooden barrier of starched collar, and glances with raised eyebrows at Hammond—
‘unless, indeed, you would ah, rather——’

“No! thank you very much, Captain Banbury—you are very kind. Miss Capel would rather dance with you.”

Hammond scowls vindictively at Captain Banbury, directs a glance of assumed indifference towards Alfreda, turns swiftly on his heel, and is soon bending down over Laura Piermain, the daughter of an ex-military man living in the same parish as that of which Hammond's father is rector, and inscribing his name on her programme for at least half-a-dozen dances and all of the extras.

Alfreda waltzes round the room with the tall hussar, and in the whirl of the dance, between the kaleidoscopic views of herself and her partner, looking quite strange in the long mirrors at either end of the room, and of the flags and flowers of the decorations, she catches occasional glimpses of the dowagers and partnerless maidens of Mildenheth seated round the room and gazing at her through long-handled glasses and over the tops of fans, critically and, she hopes, enviously.

The dances rush by, the hours are passing, the ball is almost over.

“I shall see you in London this spring, Miss Capel?”

“Oh, no! I am afraid not. Papa never takes us to London.”

“Oh, but he must this year, don't you know. You must come out. You will have to come to a drawing-room.”

“But none of us go to drawing-rooms, we are too poor. Papa could never afford to give us court dresses. My aunt, mother's half-sister, goes to court, and has presented her daughters, my cousins; but I am sure mother would never ask her to present us. Mother has never been presented herself.”

“Indeed! But it don't matter. You must get your people to bring you to town. I shall look for you at Hurlingham the very first Saturday.

Alfreda's heart beats. So much anxiety to see her again. It is very delightful. Captain Banbury must really admire her very much. Would that there were any chance of her being at Hurlingham. If only mother would talk father into taking them all up to London for a few weeks during the best part of the season.

"Oh, yes! you must come to London. Introduce me to your mamma. I must really persuade her to bring you."

Mrs. Capel is sleepy, and anxious to send for her hired carriage. Mr. Capel thinks they have stayed too long, but endeavours to school his features into his best Vicar of Wakefield sort of expression when his daughter introduces Captain Banbury.

"Very pleased to be introduced to the nephew of my very old friend, Lady Banbury."

A few amenities pass between the vicar and the captain, and the latter is cordially invited to call at the Vicarage upon any occasion that he happens to be in the neighbourhood.

The steel-bright winter sky shows through the open doorway of the Town Hall; broughams, closed waggonettes, like small prisoners' vans, and flys, drive up with a clatter on the frosty roadway—the grey, broken-kneed horse of the Vicarage fly stumbles up to the door. Mrs. Capel hustles her daughter into the passage, Captain Banbury follows, declaring that he shall leave too. He offers Alfreda an arm, takes her fan, and leads her to the carriage. "Good night, Miss Capel. We shall meet in London, I *hope*." There is a respectful pressure of the hand—a pressure that makes Alfreda's heart bound. That poor Captain Banbury! She is afraid he is falling in love with her.

"Drive on, coachee!" They are soon outside the little town, and rolling into Vicarage Lane. Alfreda's first ball is over—she thinks that it has been like a chapter in a novel.

CHAPTER II.

"They bring me tales of youth and tones of love."

IN Mildenhath it is customary among the ladies to call upon each other at least once a week, but during periods of such excitement as the week before and after a ball, the annual flower show, or a garden party at Lady Banbury's, when events and remarks require a great deal of discussion, visits are more frequent;—the entire female population *in* society meet each other, with only the change of venue of a different Mildenhath drawing-room, several times in the week. Mrs. Capel, at the Vicarage, therefore, was not surprised that the three Miss Palmers called early in the afternoon of the day after the bachelor ball, full of the brilliant success that it had been, nor that their arrival was

followed up by the appearance of Mrs. Jones-Oliphant, a purveyor of the very latest rumours and *on dits*, and a dealer in daintily envenomed darts for a possible raw or weak point.

"Oh! dear Mrs. Capel, what a splendid ball it was! I quite long to see the *Mildenheath Free Press*. Perhaps there will be a mention of it in the London papers. It was so well attended."

Mrs. Capel admits that it was a most enjoyable ball, motions Mrs. Jones-Oliphant to a chair, and examines, very earnestly, the state of the teapot, wondering how weak she dare offer tea to the latest arrival, her housewifely spirit not liking the extravagance of a fresh supply while there yet remained strength in the leaves to colour the tepid water she was now pouring in with unblushing *sang-froid*.

"So brilliant! so many pretty frocks. Oh, Alfreda, how do you do—did you enjoy yourself at all? Poor child, how cross you must be with that stupid Mrs. Strutt for making your dress shorter on one side than the other! It *was* one of Mrs. Strutt's, was it not? She is always so tiresome."

"Was it short on one side?" Alfreda asked blankly; and was it so palpably a confection by Mrs. Strutt? Alfreda had hoped it looked quite Londony, and not a Mildenheath production.

"Didn't you know, dear? Why we all noticed it, and felt quite sorry for you."

Alfreda looks so disconsolate that the three Miss Palmers take heart and weigh in, like Blucher, on the winning side.

"Yes, dear, we noticed it, too—we felt sure it must quite destroy all your pleasure. Did you enjoy it at all?—did you dance?"

Did she dance? This to Alfreda, who had imagined herself the cynosure of every eye and the envied of every partnerless damsel; she well recollects seeing the three Miss Palmers, dance after dance, reduced to talking animatedly one with the other, with a view to representing to the world in general that they liked sitting out, and had come to the ball more with an idea of enjoying light conversation than dancing or flirtation.

But Alfreda has a younger sister, a sister of fifteen years of age; a young woman destitute of bashfulness, and a person who, regarding visitors as natural enemies, derives immense satisfaction from their confounding.

"Oh! Alfie had plenty of partners, Miss Palmer, she danced with——

"Captain Banbury."

The interruption is made by Sarah, the old-established parlour-maid, who ushers in the new visitor, and makes a dash for the teapot, thinking, truly, that for him, the nephew of the Manor House, something stronger than the fluid meted out to the ladies of Mildenhath will be held necessary.

Captain Banbury is eagerly welcomed by the three Miss Palmers and Mrs. Jones-Oliphant, who all prepare to measure up every remark that falls from his moustachioed lips with a view to retailing them immediately at all the other houses at which they intend to make afternoon calls, but Captain Banbury disappoints their expectations, for he drops into a seat beside Mrs. Capel, and becomes immensely occupied in the business of tea-making, and almost animated over Mrs. Capel's vigorous assertion of the superiority of the Army and Navy Stores' Ceylon tea at 1s. 8d. a pound compared with Mr. Miles, the Mildenhath grocer's best leaf at 3s. Mrs. Capel thinks the hussar delightful, Alfreda falls from one fit of blushing into another more painful than the last. The compliment of Lady Banbury's nephew calling upon her parents so soon—his evident desire to ingratiate himself with her mother, in conjunction with his most eagerly expressed desire to meet her in town causes her heart to flutter and her hand to shake to such an extent that her tea-spoon quite rattles in her saucer, and when Captain Banbury speaks to her she answers almost at random.

Captain Banbury drinks a second cup of the "pot extraordinary" brewed in his honour, compliments Mrs. Capel on its flavour, and rises to say good-bye.

"*Au revoir*, Miss Capel, let us say; for I quite rely upon meeting you in town."

"I wish you might meet me in town, Captain Banbury; at any rate, that is to say, mamma *might* take me to town for my first season *out*." Alfreda glances indignantly at her mother. Evidently the topic of a season in London has been already spread upon the Vicarage *tapis* and unsuccessfully, so far as Alfreda is concerned. Upon Mrs. Capel her daughter's shaft glances lightly; she is busy collecting the crumbs from a very matronly lap, in thoughtful consideration of the well-worn Brussels carpet, and

she is quite inured to the accusation of callousness and indifference to the claims and rights of a large family of growing girls and boys, brought up like the poultry at the village inn, heirs, like those birds, only to such pickings as they can themselves pick up upon the common highway of life.

Captain Banbury shakes hands with Mrs. Capel, and thanks her warmly for her kind reception, says good-bye timorously to the aggressive younger sister, and then, in a slightly lower tone, murmurs a final farewell to Alfreda, administers the most refined pressure of the hand, and vanishes like the hero of a poem, if not wrapped in a cloud in the midst of a tempest of thunder and lightning, in the all too rapid closing of the Vicarage garden gate.

The middle of February, thinks Alfreda; and even if she should succeed in persuading mother to take her to town it would be, at least, June or July before she is likely to meet Captain Banbury again. Oh, dear! how dull Mildenheath will seem. How shall she ever live through the months—March, April, and May—till the season is at its height, until there may be a likelihood of any one inviting her to go and stay in London?

* * * * *

The duties of his profession call Captain Banbury to a very pleasant station in Sussex, and the Manor House returns to its normal condition of dulness, mothers' meetings and working parties; and Mildenheath languishes in that long coma from which it only rouses itself a few days before its annual flower show, towards the latter end of July. February draws to its brief conclusion, and Mildenheath has not yet tired of discussing the brilliant bachelor ball. For some fortnight or so Alfreda had revelled in such discussion. Did not the mere word "ball" entail the repeated mention of Captain Banbury's name, and certain homage to his style, his moustaches, the cut of his clothes, his dancing, the flower he wore in his buttonhole, and the unattainable material of his shirt front? His waistcoat was a garment that made the very few young men in Mildenheath sarcastic. Charlie Hammond, too, was particularly inclined to sarcasm. Very soon after Captain Banbury's departure, however, Charlie had gradually resumed his former habits of attention and waiting on Alfreda. News of the meet of the Eastshire hounds within four or five miles of Mildenheath was always brought to

the Vicarage as soon as ever it had leaked out, unofficially, from the kennels, ten or fifteen miles off; and bringing the news was usually followed up by an offer of escort to the meet, and during the lengthy hanging about the corners of plantations, or the cross paths of a wood or those points at which wise rustics would assure the foot brigade, attendant on the hunt, that a glimpse of the hounds was certain to be caught. Alfreda was usually anxious for such expeditions. They helped to kill time until—until the height of the London season—and she usually took a younger sister, an admirable preventive of a *tête-à-tête*.

The Eastshire hounds hunt late into April, and occasionally kill a May fox, so Alfreda and her sisters found it a very pleasant way of spending the lengthening spring days; walking to the meet, partaking of a very light luncheon of a sandwich, and a very short pull at a very deceptive, large looking flask of claret and water, and then listening among the furze bushes and thorns of a heath, so long as the faintest sound of the horn or speaking of the pack indicated that the hounds were not far distant, and that the hunt might, at any moment, come thundering in a scattered battalion across the heath and stubbly grass.

Upon one unusually fine day, towards the end of April, when the sun has all the warmth of May, the opening buds show their very tenderest greens and yellows and pinks, while the balmy zephyrs of the spring exhibit all that wilful strength and playfulness which, sporting with Mr. Pickwick's hat at Chatham, worked so powerful a change in the fortunes of the four immortal members of the Pickwick club, Alfreda found herself standing under the shelter of a belt of emerald bright larches at the point where a gate in the fence of a straggling inclosure of young beeches opened on to a muddy cart-track, which crossed a wide breezy heath in the direction of the high road. The usually level road was scored and cut into by the hoof-marks of a great concourse of riders, trotting backwards and forwards in the social greetings of a meet, and by the impatient pawings and prancings of the excited second horses revolting at the fate which had condemned them to stand at rest while all their companion steeds had bustled off the meeting-place in the direction of the nearest covert. Alfreda had walked quite seven miles, and felt sufficiently tired to think the upper bar of the gate a most luxurious resting-place, and to be almost

grateful to Charlie Hammond for relieving her of the weight of her mackintosh and sandwich box. Of all their many mornings with the Eastshire hounds, this has been the only occasion upon which Charlie has been privileged to be alone with Alfreda, and this he has only been able to achieve by artifice. After a long and faithful attendance at the parish church of Mildenheth; a dexterous agility in always arriving from the west aisle into the porch at the very moment that the Capels issue from the nave; after the gravest attention to the fashionableness of his neckties, boots, and waistcoats; and a growing and quite remarkable admiration for the Reverend Mr. Capel's puns, Mr. Hammond had so far ingratiated himself with Mrs. Capel, that his suggestions of an expedition to the meet of the foxhounds or to a football match of more than ordinary importance had usually been received without opposition. But after half-a-dozen of such expeditions poisoned for him by the unescapable presence of a younger sister, either a clever one who frightens him or a pert one who insults him, Charlie has resorted to artifice, and, although adverse to exposing his hand to a friend, for friends are sometimes treacherous, he has resolved not to confide in a friend, but to make use of one, trusting to the chapter of accidents as to whether his motive be suspected or not.

The assistance of a brother is out of the question. Brothers are invariably troublesome, critical, and often rude to an acquaintance. An acquaintance among the freshmen of his own year at Oxford is converted into a friend, and is invited to spend Easter with the Hammonds, and accompanies Charlie upon the morning that Alfreda and her sister, the pert one, meet him, by appointment, at the Cross Roads. All Alfreda's clever management in the avoidal of a *tête-à-tête* is frustrated by the arrival of a fourth. A walking *partie carrée* invariably and instantly resolves itself into two pairs—one slightly ahead of the other, for about five minutes, and at the end of a quarter-of-an-hour sufficiently far apart to be out of ear-shot, eye-shot, or the probability of meeting again and re-forming into a *partie carrée* at any period of the excursion before the time and place are reached for taking leave of each other. Mr. Smallgo, the freshman, whose knickerbockers are sufficiently voluminous for the heroic-sized checked design of the rough cloth of which they are

made to be seen in its entirety; his variegated gaiters and boots are, to the pert Miss Capel, the emblem of all that is really fashionable and delightful; and enraptured at seeing a prospect of no longer occupying the post of wished-away third, but important first, she instantly impounds the proprietor of those delightfully *outré* garments, and marshals him towards a short cut which, being considerably longer than the highway, separates them from their companions and affords Hammond the opportunity he has been sighing for for weeks.

The opportunity has arrived, but, somehow or other, Charlie does not grapple with it. He seems more inclined, indeed, to talk about the weather, and the hunting, and the newspapers, than of that one topic which has been so very near his heart lately, but seems so very difficult of broaching now. And Alfreda gives him no help, but has insisted upon wasting hours, golden hours, in fruitless pursuit of her sister and the freshman; for Alfreda's younger sister has exhibited an absolutely grown-up dexterity in evading the pursuing party, although often within a few feet of each other, and continually professing the most earnest desire to "join the others." The meet, and the loitering on the outskirts of the hunt, however, have tired Alfreda and, in spite of her very genuine desire to re-capture the missing pedestrians, she is very pleased to rest upon the gate, and listen to the chattering of a bustling little colony of chaffinches, very busy among the branches of a beech near the gate, whose swelling red buds reveal a glimpse of the most delicate ethereal green. Charlie hovers near her, delighted to be permitted to hold her mackintosh. *Her* mackintosh. He looks at it sentimentally. If it did not smell so exactly like an escape in a newly-mended gaspipe, he would feel inclined to say something poetical about it.

"Alfreda, I am through."

"Through? Through what? Your quarter's allowance?"

"Oh, no! You know what I mean. Greats, of course; I have got my degree."

"Have you? how delightful. I quite congratulate you."

"Do you? I am so pleased." Charlie looks absolutely radiant.

"Oh, yes," continues Alfreda musingly, and glancing away towards the blue line of the horizon on one side, and on the

other low furze bushes and a distant line of tall purple-hued pines, almost black, against a turquoise sky. "It is very nice for you to have got your degree. You will be able to leave Mildenhath at once, and go and live in London; and then you will look down upon us in Mildenhath. I suppose people who live in London always despise people who live in the country."

"Oh, no, they don't. Not all. Not unless they are fools, that is to say. For my part, although I shall be obliged to live in London, I would much rather live in Mildenhath, unless—" Charlie looks very earnestly at Alfreda, but her eyes are turned away towards that blue distance and the tall line of trees beyond which, and across two or three counties, nestles, in its warm blanket of soot and smoke, the vast and ever-growing metropolis. Charlie repeats:

"Unless——"

"Unless what?"

"Unless—unless the people—some one, that is to say, whom I like very much, would come and live with me in London."

"Some one whom you like. Who is that; Mr. Smallgo?"

"Alfreda!" Charlie's voice sounds both piteous and reproachful. "You know whom I mean."

Alfreda fears she does; but the dam has burst and the torrent rushes forth in those old strains which are the new.

"No, no, Charlie. You make a great mistake. I should never make you happy. You must fall in love with some one else. My sister Philippa, for instance; she will be seventeen next year, or Anne; Anne is awfully clever."

But Charlie refuses to fall in love with either Anne or Philippa. He wishes to marry Alfreda. His grandfather has possessed interest with a cabinet minister, and there is a place for him in a public office. A moderate income will recompense him for sitting in a well-heated room in a Government office, reading "Ally Sloper," and other flowers of literature. He will be in a position to marry a girl who is not worldly or ambitious, and he will do all that a man can do to make a wife really happy. Of course, his income will be moderate, very moderate; but so are the rents of those houses, pretty little Queen-Annish houses, on the outskirts of Kensington.

"No, no, no. It is of no use. Alfreda is really fond of Charlie. Fond in a sisterly sort of way, don't you know. Why

they have known each other for years, and she feels she can never marry him. In fact, she has made up her mind *never* to marry."

"Never? Then is there no other?" Charlie asks this hesitatingly.

"No. No one else in the wide world."

"Then leave it open, Alfreda! Don't decide at once; let me ask you again in six months. Let me ask you every six months until you consent."

"No, no. It would be of no use. Besides, it would not be *fair* to you." Alfreda says this with dignity, and descends from the gate in a business-like manner and demands her mackintosh in a tone that banishes sentiment at once.

CHAPTER III.

"Towered cities please me then."

MAY opens, blooms, and wanes; and in spite of all the beauty of the spring and very fine weather, which supplies not only Mildenheath with an inexhaustible subject of conversation, but the daily papers of the metropolis with a topic for leaders innumerable, and controversial letters from clergymen who, on referring to their diaries, find "that there has never been quite so fine a spring since the year 18—, and that as many of my readers may perhaps be interested in the remarkable coincidence that in that spring, as in this present exquisite season, I have noted a swallow as early as the third of April, seated on the little leaden gutter on the top of the roofing of my back kitchen." In spite, I say, of the beauty of "the boyhood of the year," Alfreda feels her life very dull, very flat, very stale, and very, very unprofitable. A little walking, a row now and again upon the river, a very, very little reading, and the occasional beginning of some colossal undertaking in embroidery, and the laying aside of the work as impossible in the following week. Moreover, the Reverend Mr. Capel is positively stony-hearted upon the subject of London, which he finds very expensive, and abhors otherwise than for an occasional visit *en garçon* or *en curate* when he professes business with his bishop, and goes up alone, untrammelled by his family, and puts up at a very pleasant hotel in Kensington—the only sort of hotel which, he says, is possible for his profession. Mrs. Capel, too, is most cruel. She meets Alfreda's hints and

insinuations about the delights of the London shops, and her asseverations that she *ought* to have a few music-lessons from a London music-master, with the motherly unkindness of:

"Rubbish, my dear child, get up early," with a cutting emphasis on the *early*. "Get up early, and practise an hour every morning. You play very fairly now, and with a little practice——"

Alfreda gives an angry shrug to her shoulders, and turns aside with a pettishness which Charlie Hammond would stoutly deny her to be capable of. "Oh! how near-sighted these mothers are," thinks Alfreda. She has often heard her mother bemoaning the difficulty of providing for daughters, and here, where with a little management only—Alfreda feels that she is not by nature conceited, not given to imagining herself a beauty, nor that every man who sees her must fall in love with her, but still she is no fool, she tells herself, and Captain Banbury spoke to her in a manner,—was so earnest, indeed, that if mothers were not the blindest of mortals, and her own family the most unappreciative——. However, to repine is hopeless, and the one comfort—and that, indeed, is a very poor one—that she has in life, just at present, is that she has refused to marry Charles Hammond, whom both her parents are prepared to welcome heartily as a son-in-law, but whom Alfreda considers, with his small place in the Home Office, and the moderate income he speaks of, a contemptible match for herself, with all her youth and good looks before her. Of course, he is a dear fellow, and fairly good-looking, and very, very fond of her, but then he is not anything attractive—not a cavalry officer—not a tall, fashionable hussar, in point of fact.

Just when life seems at its very dreariest, and Alfreda begins to think that for her '*Le ciel n'a pas un coin d'azur*,' something happens—a letter from London arrives that turns the whole current of her existence. Mrs. Capel receives a letter from her youngest sister, the sister who has made the best marriage of the family, the sister who has married a wealthy, elderly man has been left a widow at a comfortable time of life, with a comfortable competence, and a very pretty little cottage *ornée* in Surrey, with a pretty garden, paddock, and one or two meadows adjoining. This sister, Mrs. Thomas Fuller, writes that she has taken a furnished flat in London for the season. A flat in a gigantic pile of buildings near the Edgware Road, which contrive, by

dint of the boldest of self-assertiveness, to insert Hyde Park into the address that they lay claim to, and that she will be very pleased if Mrs. Capel will allow her eldest girl to come up and pay her a visit. In case she finds her niece a nice, pleasant companion, she holds out the delightful prospect of the visit only ceasing with the last night of the opera, the death-knell of the season.

To Alfreda's boundless indignation Mrs. Capel hesitates before writing to accept the invitation. "The matter must be discussed with papa," and such phrases as, "expensive journey," "tips to servants," and "unsettling the girl," reach her outraged ear before the matter is finally decided, and her father settles the matter in an unfeeling—"Very well, my dear, let the girl go, but mind—no extravagance! We can't afford that. No nonsense about new dresses and hats, and all that sort of thing. The girl will be very happy with her aunt; all her aunt will care about will be to see her neat."

London, and no new dresses! However, the mere thought of London makes Alfreda dance for joy and spin round the school-room like a teetotum on the tips of her toes—an undignified proceeding for a young lady who is going to be launched into her first season from a flat in a region near Hyde Park. By dint of much talking, and, at length, a shameless assertion of having grown out of *all* her winter and last summer's clothes, Mrs. Capel is induced to supply her daughter with one or two light spring dresses, made in the most fashionable style that Mrs Strutt knows of; and Mrs. Fuller, the aunt in London, promises a new hat from a Bond Street shop.

Oh, how Alfreda longs to be in London! The lengthening spring days, during which, from morn till dewy eve, she is working at one or the other new or re-decorated garments to be worn in London, hardly fly by fast enough. Every morning, at lunch, as the papers and post arrive, she snatches the *Morning Post* to see how much has already taken place that she has missed. The first meet of four-in-hands is over, there have been several good matches at Hurlingham, the first night of the opera is over, the Oaks has been run, At Homes innumerable at the embassies have been given, and in haunts of fashion in Belgrave Square, into which Alfreda can hardly hope to penetrate. But the day dawns at last that is to carry her to London. Charlie has called

the evening before, and has bidden her quite a melancholy adieu, which she has thought selfish of him, as he knows she is so very anxious to see London, and he has quite startled her by informing her that he is to be in town soon himself, and asking for her aunt's address, and if he may call upon her.

"Oh, yes!" Alfreda answers, "but how funny it will be to see *you* in London."

"Will it be so very funny—will you not be pleased to see me?"

"Oh, I shall be pleased to see you, of course, but I dare say we shall have such a lot to do."

Charlie sighs. He has permission to call, that is something. He wonders if the aunt in a flat is a very unapproachable person.

* * * * *

Her first Sunday in London. Mrs. Fuller executes her weekly worship in rather a fusty little church not very far from the Marylebone Road. A church so near to Harley Street, and Wimpole and Welbeck Streets, that its congregation being very medical, the profane call it the Pill Box. From the Pill Box to the park is a pleasant walk upon a warm Sunday in June, and the incumbent of the Pill Box is far too wise a man to immure his congregation sufficiently long to make the church parade a rush. As Alfreda bends her head, crowned with the prettiest of hats, running over with imitation blossoms of the spring, during the Litany, she wonders and rebukes herself that she, a clergyman's daughter, should be thinking so much of the parade and so very little of the service, and she reviews the feminine backs in front of her; broad Harley Street backs, in rustling silks and adorned with not fashionable, but most respectable and good trimmings of a beady and expensive looking order; slim Welbeck Street backs, in muslins and embroideries, wives of those clever, rising young physicians, the great specialists of the future, and wonders if the same wickedly frivolous thoughts are running in the heads beneath those expensive bonnets. These frivolous thoughts dwell almost entirely upon one subject: Will Captain Banbury be in the park? Will Alfreda see him if he is? Will he see Alfreda? Alfreda has been told that everybody who is in London goes into the park immediately after church; from the heavy guardsmen, who saunter through the Apsley gate from the pretty Knightsbridge church, to those obliging young men at Debenham's, and the other big shops, who leave Hornsey

and Brixton, and other far off suburbs, quite early in the morning in order, by dint of cross-country omnibuses, and long journeys upon slow tramcars, to "do" the Row in the best make-up they can achieve of the bored gentlemen they see most discontentedly accompanying the army of the frivolous fair who shop for amusement, who lead the fashion and inflate the profits of the large West End houses. But then Alfreda also gathers that many people, men especially, are in the habit of leaving town from Saturday to Monday, rushing off to hotels upon the flowery banks of Thames, or to luxuriously spend the week-end upon houseboats, hardly lacking one luxury of a well-found London mansion. Is Captain Banbury one of these? Oh, how long that last hymn seems! Verse after verse, and in what appears to be a never-ending succession, like the Ptolemies, or the Shepherd Kings, in Egyptian history.

But at length, amid the clink-clink of the penny pieces and sixpences into the embroidered bags of the sidesmen, that last hymn does draw to its most welcome conclusion, and the dingy doors of the Pill Box open to emit a rainbow-hued crowd into a little side street opening into Oxford Street, which Alfreda and her aunt cross and then enter the park by the Marble Arch. How Alfreda's heart beats—the wide gravel-walk leading past Stanhope Gate to the corner seems unsubstantial and unreal; albeit the dense block of people, a moving battalion seemingly ten thousand strong, seems very real indeed and quite blocks out that more peaceful, penned-in flock sitting upon iron chairs in rows upon the close-cut grass. In one of these pens, commanding a good view of the crowd approaching from the statue of Achilles upon one side, and from Hyde Park Corner on the other, Mrs. Fuller takes up her position; and Alfreda sits beside her, near the little path between the chairs and the railings, down which the shepherd walks, marking each unknown lamb as his own and demanding the necessary penny. Oh, what myriads of people! Alfreda's eyes strain in her endeavour to take in every unit among those thousands. Such thousands of stiff collars and glossy top-hats, but not that particular wooden adornment or delightful original shaped head-dress Alfreda is looking for, an arduous task rendered more so by the necessity of appearing not to be so engaged, and of keeping up a stream of frivolous and amusing remarks to the aunt, who has launched her niece on to

a very pleasant social wave, demanding no greater return than that her *protégée* shall look pretty, be a credit to her in society, and amuse her.

Such an army of people—fashionably-dressed women, cool and elegant, coming, prayer-book in hand, from the churches near Piccadilly; Americans, *outré* and defiant of criticism, come to look at the Britishers on Sunday; the suburban contingents with done-up dresses and untidy hair; the drapers' assistant detachments, mostly with flowers (a single blossom of geranium) in their buttonholes; country reinforcements for Ascot week, very sunburnt and with creased clothes; tired-looking Londoners in frock coats, "built," which to the uninitiated must be presumed to mean "padded," by the tailor of the hour—but no sign of Captain Banbury, and the minute hand of the clock at Hyde Park Corner marks the quarter before two. Alfreda watches it in despair, for she knows that her aunt lunches at two and that very soon they must retreat in the direction of her aerial flat.

Mrs. Fuller has already glanced once or twice at the clock and the minute hand seems galloping onwards towards two o'clock, when Alfreda looks round and gasps. There, upon the other side of the iron railings, talking to a group of ladies seated rather far back in the next pen, stands Captain Banbury. He is bending down towards the ladies, who are seated, and must soon be looking in Alfreda's direction. Almost before she can restrain herself Alfreda has given a sort of half bound from her seat and bows, blushing, to the tall hussar. Captain Banbury looks up, drops the circle of plain glass alarmingly from his eye, and bows with a nonchalance that makes Alfreda turn quite pale. Is it possible that he is not pleased to see her? He, who made such a point of her coming to London; can it be that her too demonstrative recognition has disgusted him? All the glory seems fled out of Hyde Park. The gaily-dressed crowd seems to be transformed into a dingy, vulgar mob.

"Isn't it nearly lunch-time, aunt; shall we not go home?"

But Mrs. Fuller has just caught sight of an acquaintance, and waits, bowing and smiling, until her friends can make their way into the pen. Alfreda sits, disconsolate, digging the tip of her parasol into the dry turf. Oh, how she hates London. Oh, how she hates—a rustling sound attracts her attention, she looks up and beholds Captain Banbury scaling the palings that

separate the pens. He alights quite close to her, and raises his hat. "How do you do, Miss—er—the fact is, don't you know, I have quite forgotten your name; fact is, confoundedly stupid, don't you know—remembered your face immediately."

"My name is Capel," Alfreda answers grandly, endeavouring to be very frigid.

"Capel! Oh, of course. My dear Miss Capel, how very pleased I am to see you." Then with a glance towards the top of Mrs. Fuller's bonnet, "Introduce me to your mamma, if you please, Miss Capel."

"I *did* introduce you to my mother, at Mildenhath, and you called upon her the next day. This is my aunt. Auntie, this is Captain Banbury—Captain Banbury, Mrs. Fuller!" Alfreda is indignant. To have danced a dozen dances with her, to have visited her parents, implored to see her again—and to have forgotten her very name and circumstances.

Captain Banbury's eyes are following the party of ladies he had been talking to previously. A tall, elegant woman, very well-preserved and freely tinted, and two tall, elegant young women, very like her, but a little fresher and a very little less freely tinted.

"Are you up in town for long, Miss Capel?"

"As long as my aunt will keep me."

"Quite so! Been doing much."

"Oh, yes; I have not been here a week and we have done something each day. The opera the *very* first evening I came, the Row, a garden party, a dinner, a ball, and the Academy. Oh, dear, I never knew London was so delightful. But you remember you told me I should like London, and you said I should like Hurlingham, especially. Aunt is going to take me to Hurlingham one day next month."

"Oh, don't wait till next month. Come next Saturday. We have a magnificent match on, next Saturday. I should awfully like you to see it."

"Would you, really? Thank you very much." Alfreda is rapidly commencing a rapturous expression of thanks when she is interrupted by Captain Banbury.

"Awfully sorry, don't you know, Miss Capel. Should have liked to send you my tickets, immensely, but they are promised, have been promised quite a long time. Why didn't you let me

know you were coming? I wish you had, don't you know. I should have liked to call."

"Would you, really? Aunt would like you to call, I am sure. She has a day. Monday—the first and third Monday."

Mrs. Fuller murmurs that she will be very pleased to see Captain Banbury upon any Monday that he is able to call.

"Thanks, awfully. First and third Monday. Quite so. *Au revoir*, Miss Capel. Remember, Saturday. You must back the blue and yellows. I shall think of you in the scrimmage, and expect you to applaud tremendously if our side wins."

Alfreda promises, and feels quite certain that the blue and yellows will be triumphant. Captain Banbury raises his hat and is swallowed up in the black wave of people that is setting towards Piccadilly. Alfreda watches the receding wave and loses herself in a reverie, from which she wakes with a start to find a tall frock-coated figure beside her, holding out his hand.

"Mr. Hammond! Whatever brings you to London?"

It is on the tip of Hammond's tongue to say, "You, Alfreda," but he restrains himself and says carelessly—"Oh the season—theatres, don't you know, and one thing or another. One likes to see what's going on. Are you going at once—won't you introduce me?"

Alfreda makes Mr. Hammond known to her aunt, and Mrs. Fuller begins to think that her chaperonage of a pretty niece seems likely to considerably increase her male acquaintance in London. Mrs. Fuller is buxom and middle-aged, but she has a sneaking regard for a well set up young man, and a lurking idea that she will score off the occupiers of No. 38B, Colossus Mansions, upon her next Monday, if she adds two young men to the bi-monthly herd of women she accumulates from four to six in her two small drawing-rooms, in place of the solitary musical genius, with long hair and a velveteen coat, who invariably represents his sex at the Friday afternoon parties at No. 38B. With a view to encouraging future docility in calling, Mrs. Fuller invites Hammond to accompany herself and her niece to Colossus Mansions, and to take luncheon with them; an invitation which he accepts with rapture, and taking possession of Mrs. Fuller's prayer-book he proceeds to walk across the park beside that lady, listening to her encomiums upon the advantages of situation of Colossus Mansions, and contenting himself with an occasional

glance at Alfreda's flowery hat across the solid millinery of Mrs. Fuller's best summer bonnet.

All through luncheon, and during so much of the afternoon as Charlie feels that he dare remain without risk of intrusion, Alfreda is so far more gracious towards him than usual, and so encouraging, that Charlie feels quite elated, and wonders if the charms of a London season have at last opened her eyes to his manifold good qualities, first amongst which he reckons his constant devotion to herself.

The arrival of afternoon tea, and a slightly sleepy, Sunday-afternoon appearance which seems growing upon Mrs. Fuller, at last presses the fact upon Charlie that he has stayed the outside limits of an afternoon visit. He would fain, indeed, linger yet a little longer, basking in the warmth of Alfreda's unwonted display of favour. Mrs. Fuller leans back in a low, very comfortable easy chair, and wonders if she shall ever summon up the energy to put on her bonnet and get ready for evening service—it seems to her old-fashioned notions a trifle *fin de siècle*-ish that her niece offers to escort Hammond to the outer door of the little fortress so high up above the Edgware Road, commanding a view of the Surrey Hills far off, above a wilderness of chimney-pots. Hammond is enraptured, and wishes that the little vestibule were miles long, instead of an irregular area of about 15 square feet. Charlie is fain to linger, looking for his silver-mounted cane, and putting on a glove with the greatest amount of care and consumption of time.

"Good-bye, Alfreda." Charlie quite expects to be snubbed for presuming to use her Christian name, but Alfreda only smiles sweetly :

"Here is your glove, Charlie. I hope we shall meet again, somewhere or other, don't you know, before we leave London."

"Yes, of course. Couldn't we? Isn't there anything you would like to see?"

"Is there?" Alfreda appears to be considering for a few moments. "Oh, yes, of course—Hurlingham—I should love to see Hurlingham. Oh, Charlie, *do* you think you could get aunt and me tickets for Hurlingham on Saturday next? Oh, it would be *so* good of you."

"Tickets for Hurlingham?" Charlie appears rather dubious. He is not a member, and it is short notice.

"Oh, don't trouble about Hurlingham, Mr. Hammond. After all, I daresay aunt has already made some arrangement for Saturday."

"Oh, but I shall—next Saturday. Yes, I will get tickets somehow or other. But, Alfreda, promise me not to allow Mrs. Fuller to make any other engagement. Promise me you will go."

"Oh, yes ! I will go, Charlie. I promise you that."

CHAPTER IV.

"Old and yet ever new, and simple and beautiful always,
Love immortal and young in the endless succession of lovers."

By what devious courses, by what repeated takings down to supper of the stoutest matrons, by what looking up of old friends at the University clubs and American bars, Hammond lighted upon the person able and willing to bestow upon him three tickets for Hurlingham that bright June Saturday, it would be hard indeed to say. And equally hard to say how many times between Sunday and Saturday Alfreda declared to herself that the time would never pass, that interval of six days appearing a gap of space never to be bridged over. Once Alfreda had met Captain Banbury at a ball—at a subscription ball arranged by Lady Dorcas Goodenough, and given at the Whitehall Rooms, in aid of her ladyship's fund for endowing almshouses for the shelter of abandoned cats and aged lapdogs. At this ball, Captain Banbury, who at the beginning of the entertainment had seemed not to recognize Alfreda, towards the end of the evening, and when the "best" people were beginning to leave, had suddenly discovered her on the dais with her aunt, and had been very polite and very attentive indeed, and had danced several times with her, and upon her remarking that she believed she had secured tickets for Hurlingham had expressed rapture that certainly only admitted of one interpretation. As the room grew sufficiently clear for dancing without collision to be really easy, when only water ices remained for the refreshment of the heated dancers, and when it became more and more obvious that the ball was tottering upon its very last legs, Mrs. Fuller at length insisted upon Alfreda consenting to depart, in spite of her renewed declarations that the dancing was only just beginning to be good.

"Too bad of Mrs. Fuller to want you to leave. Won't you have one more waltz? They are just beginning such an awfully jolly piece, don't you know."

"Thank you very much, Captain Banbury. It is quite impossible to stay any longer."

"Just so. Your aunt is adamantine, Miss Capel. When shall we meet again?"

Alfreda blushes, and her eyes brighten.

"At Hurlingham, I hope. We are going to be given tickets!"

"Just so. I am awfully pleased, don't you know. I shall be looking out for you after the match, Miss Capel. I hope you will be alone with Mrs. Fuller. I should like to show you the grounds—awfully jolly—old trees, the river, don't you know—and all that sort of thing."

Again that respectful, but most expressive, pressure of the hand, as Captain Banbury bows and says good-night at the entrance of the ball-room, and Alfreda gets into the carriage in a whirl of excitement and delight. What a pity Charlie is coming to Hurlingham. It would have been so much pleasanter, herself and auntie alone, and then—if Captain Banbury had wished to come up to them and to walk with them among the old trees by the river, and to take tea with them afterwards and, perhaps, drive back to town in the cool of the evening.

Saturday! A delicious sunshiny morning, hardly at all misty, for London, and a blue sky; and a brilliant summery glow upon the overflowing balcony flower-beds and window boxes of Mayfair. Charlie Hammond looks very happy, seated upon the uncomfortable cricket seat of Mrs. Fuller's victoria, bowling gently across the park in the direction of the Fulham Road. Alfreda, in her very prettiest dress and hat, leans back beside her aunt, contemplative. This wonderful Saturday has at last arrived, and she is to see Captain Banbury; first, in all the glory and excitement of the contest, and afterwards beneath the shade of the spreading oaks and elms and beeches of the emerald lawns, with their butterfly sprinkling of brightly-dressed women and grey-coated men. She glances occasionally at Charlie, dressed in a Mildenhath suit, and wearing gloves from a Mildenhath draper. How different from Captain Banbury, whose garments have all the appearance of being lined with a thin sheeting of deal, so rigid are they and so creaseless. And Charlie's tie, neat.

but so unfashionable. No daring plaid, like Captain Banbury's, and studs of most ordinary design.

In the winding road at Fulham there is an air of excitement and gaiety. Mrs. Fuller's vehicle has repeatedly to draw towards the left to allow of some high barouche, with large, sleek, bay horses to dash past, or a tall mail phaeton with its great match pair, heavy harness and clanking chains, or a dark coloured slimly-built coach sparsely occupied and principally passengered by grooms; but at last the gates are reached, and by the time the teams arrive upon the velvety turf, Mrs. Fuller and her niece are seated side by side in the front row of chairs, with Hammond, attentive and enraptured, sitting beside Alfreda, and congratulating himself upon those unworthy shifts and diplomatic wiles that have happily secured him these much coveted cane seats.

When those gallant blues and yellows, and those elegant reds and blacks, gallop playfully up and down the lawn, and the hardy looking ponies, clipped to the quintessence of neatness, curvet and prance during the manœuvres of a preliminary, friendly scrimmage, Alfreda feels quite dazzled. All look so elegant, so military, so exactly like Captain Banbury, she finds it hard to distinguish him. Nevertheless she does recognize him, at last, and when the rival teams thunder past from either goal towards the middle of the ground, she feels that the days of Arthur and Lancelot and the table round have come again, and heroes and baronets meet in the awful shock, and wonders if Guinevere trembled lest Lancelot should be thrown. The game proceeds, Hammond intensely interested in its progress, Mrs. Fuller in the dresses round about her, and Alfreda hopelessly endeavouring to discover whether each successful round of applause was meant in honour of the blues and yellows or the reds and blacks, so mysterious and purposeless seem their curvetings and prancings, furious gallops and sudden pullings up. At last either the blue and yellow or the red and black, Alfreda is not quite sure which, are pronounced to have achieved a glorious victory, and the cane seats are deserted and the butterfly crowd scatters in the direction of the tea-room and the lawn. Alfreda's heart beats pit-a-pat, she answers Charlie at random, and is so slow at discovering too ridiculous dresses, or really exquisite bonnets, that her aunt fancies she must be ill, and makes Charlie miserable by suggesting that she looks pale.

Charlie at last proposes strawberries and cream, to Alfreda's annoyance, which Mrs. Fuller accepts with *empressement*. What a scene of enchantment compared with Mildenhatch's most brilliant festival, the flower show! But Alfreda can hardly enjoy it, nor eat her strawberries, fearing that in the continual stream of ladies in delicate-lined fabrics, and light-suited men, she may miss Captain Banbury—that he may be looking out for her, and that, invisible, across the standing and walking multitudes, he shall pass by, and be swallowed up among the numbers of acquaintance, all of whom, she is quite sure, must be anxious to see and absorb him.

The tables are all filled; strawberries and cream, and tea and thin bread and butter disappear, and still those well-dressed groups are passing. Tall, sprightly damsels in their first season, open-eyed and pink-cheeked; *distingué* girls in their second and third—pale, languid, and in costumes audacious and original; white moustachioed military men, and the pallid frail youth of society, in pointed boots and delicate kid gloves.

Alfreda begins to think that Captain Banbury must be ill, or gone home. That the blazing sun during the match—no! there he is—he is coming—alone! Oh, how uncomfortably near Charlie is! There is a fourth chair unoccupied beside Mrs. Fuller. What a dreadful pity that it is not beside Alfreda. Could it not be placed in an unpremeditated manner so that when Captain Banbury comes up he may sit down beside her, and not by her aunt, to be bored making conversation? How can it be managed? Impossible, Captain Banbury is too near! He is not alone! There are three ladies with him. Tiresome people; they must have accosted him, and tacked themselves on to him just as he was wanting to join Alfreda. As they come nearer, Alfreda recognizes them. They are most exquisitely dressed. They are the tall, elegant woman with the two tall, elegant daughters, one of whom, forward creature, is examining Captain Banbury's walking-stick. They approach, Captain Banbury glances round, recognizes Alfreda's smiling, blushing countenance, he raises his hat, respectfully; the tall, elegant woman and one daughter stop to admire a flower bed, Captain Banbury and the tall daughter examining the walking-stick, walk on, and gradually disappear beneath the trees. An opening in the overarching beeches reveals Captain Banbury

stooping down to button the tall young lady's glove. When it is buttoned, they disappear out of sight in that peculiarly *à deux* fashion which brands them but too obviously engaged!

Very soon Mrs. Fuller suggests the carriage; a suggestion which, as a general rule, Alfreda has been in the habit of combating, but upon this occasion, to her aunt's extreme surprise, she makes no demur whatever, but wearily acquiesces.

"Very well, aunt, let us go—it must be very, *very* late."

"You are not ill, my dear, are you?"

"Oh, no, aunt." Charlie Hammond darts a keen, examining glance at Alfreda.

"But you are ill, Miss Capel. You are pale—paler than when we started; let me get you something—some brandy."

"Take us to the carriage, please. I don't want anything else. I am quite sick of Hurlingham."

Hammond casts a reproachful glance at Alfreda, and silently takes possession of Mrs. Fuller's dust-cloak and parasol and shawl. Mrs. Fuller leads the way towards the gates, wondering at the depths of a young woman's ingratitude, and the equally unfathomable depths of a young bachelor's endurance. For a whole week, Hammond, who is country bred, and has very few friends in London, has been moving Heaven and earth to secure tickets for this particular match, and the young woman who has set him this task has not even the politeness to affect to have enjoyed herself while using them. While they are waiting near the wide carriage gates for Mrs. Fuller's victoria, Alfreda perceives in the distance the tall figure of Captain Banbury, still accompanied by the elegant and slim young lady, and her slim, elegant sister and well-preserved mamma; they, too, are going to turn their backs upon the verdure of immemorial oaks and elms and chestnuts, and the silvery waters of the Thames. As the party approaches, Alfreda suddenly forms a desperate resolution, and before she allows her mind time to reflect upon it or reject it, she puts it into sudden, irrevocable execution. Before her aunt is conscious of her intention, she darts up to Captain Banbury, fearlessly and regardless of the chilly astonishment of the two elegant young ladies and the ferocious glare of their mamma, and holds out a small hand, trembling a little, in spite of herself. "You must let me say good-bye, Captain Banbury. I may not see you again before I return

to Mildenhath ; you must let me congratulate you for my aunt."

Alfreda wonders how she can commit a falsehood so easily and with no indication of the earth's preparing to open and swallow her up.

"My aunt heard you had become engaged and thought that I ought to offer you my congratulations. It is true, I suppose?"

"Aw—quite true, I believe, Miss—aw—Capel. Let me introduce you to my—aw—*fiancée*. Miss Capel, a neighbour of my aunt, Lady Banbury's—Miss Carrington-King, Miss Emily Carrington-King, Mrs. Carrington-King."

The three ladies execute three chilly and condescending bows, and Mrs. Carrington-King, glancing apparently through Miss Alfreda Capel as though no such obstruction to her view existed, observes :

"*That* is my barouche, I think, Captain Banbury. Carter is always so punctual ;" and sweeping onwards to a very magnificent vehicle, swung upon cee-springs and drawn by two very sleek and very lofty horses, the tall hussar and his party soon rolled away along the dusty Fulham Road.

Alfreda sits absolutely silent beside her aunt as the victoria follows the string of carriages returning Londonwards, and Hammond watches her face anxiously, feeling quite incapable of taking any interest in Mrs. Fuller's lively remarks upon the persons and dresses at the match. A block of some complication at an awkward corner of King's Road brings the long string of carriages to a standstill, and by the time they are in motion once again Mrs. Fuller's useful victoria, drawn by her one, strong brougham horse, has caught up Mrs. Carrington-King's barouche and high steppers.

Mrs. Fuller carefully surveys the party in the barouche from the sheltering cover of a lace bedecked parasol.

"What a dissipated-looking young fellow that Captain Banbury is, my dear Alfreda, and what a receding chin and weak sort of expression he has."

"Receding chin," repeats Alfreda, in a pained voice ; "has he a receding chin?" murmurs Alfreda, and it seems to her as though a film falls from before her eyes ; and she listens to Hammond's rapturous assent to Mrs. Fuller's observations with amusement and, for the first time, a smile wreaths her lips.

Hammond observes that smile, and is hardly able to keep his attention fixed, but hears a confusing tangle of: "Very vapid sort of countenance—dreadfully affected young women, and anything but young—fourth or fifth seasons—frightful mother—bald, too, at his age; but then, an expensive cavalry regiment!" Mrs. Fuller shrugs her shoulders expressively, and Hammond endeavours to express assent and complete agreement with all Mrs. Fuller's remarks, whatever they may have been.

When Colossus Mansions are reached, Mrs. Fuller graciously turns to Hammond:

"Thanks for a delightful afternoon, Mr. Hammond—if I thought you would care to take a snack with us—there is sure to be some sort of dinner at seven, but you know how little women understand about such matters—and take us to the theatre or opera?" Hammond glances inquiringly towards Alfreda. "Oh! do come, Mr. Hammond! I do so adore the opera," and then, in a coaxing voice and manner which puts the finishing touch to Hammond's determination, she repeats: "Oh, *do* come, Mr. Hammond."

The driver of Mr. Hammond's hansom receives a shilling extraordinary for a reckless disregard of the driving regulations of the great metropolis, and whirls him to his hotel in a few minutes' less time than Mr. Hammond had thought it possible. By means of the unromantic but useful telephone, a demand is made to the box office of Covent Garden for three balcony stalls in a good position, and a charnel-house voice in a ghostly whisper announces that three in the front row are at Mr. Hammond's disposal, and will be reserved for him at the box office.

During the modest little dinner served in the bijou and somewhat darksome dining-room of the flat, Hammond, sitting opposite Alfreda, whose youthful countenance, and not his dinner, he devours with hungry tenderness, vainly endeavours to make intelligent and clever replies to his hostess's animated flow of small talk. Before the coffee is served Mrs. Fuller has been reluctantly compelled to come to the conclusion that there is not much in Charlie Hammond. He may be good-natured, but his conversation is very poor, so unsuccessful have been the young man's endeavours to follow the thread of the widow's remarks, and frame suitable replies; while his attention has been too deeply engrossed by Alfreda's brightly sparkling

eyes filled with the light of excitement, her flushed and rosy cheeks, and a dimple which seated in one oval cheek only seems to him to be possessed of double the fascination of a symmetrical hollow in both cheeks. Through the wide lobbies of the Opera House, however, Hammond exhibits the wiliness of the serpent to such good effect, that when the balcony stalls are reached Mrs. Fuller is carefully placed in the further seat, next to an irreproachably black-brocaded lady of the class that enjoys the opera by the aid of a book of the translated words only ; Alfreda is seated beside her aunt, and Hammond beside her, with no neighbour but the carpeted gangway. During the first act and the subsequent interval, Mrs. Fuller is a little disposed to resent the want of attention of her niece, who seems engrossed in a conversation with Hammond, which, on his side, seems to consist for the greater part in questions, and, on hers, of gazing fixedly at the sticks of her fan, and blushing very deeply, while her lips tremble, half parted, in a smile. But Mrs. Fuller is good-natured, and begins to gather some notion of the little comedy being enacted during some of the loud crashes of the "Huguenots." Mrs. Fuller has a simple woman's instinctive love of sentiment, and endeavours to look unconscious when, under cover of a *fortissimo* chorus, she is almost sure that she catches the inquiry :

"Then you really, really, do, Alfreda? You are quite sure that you don't like that Banbury fellow?"

"Oh, Charlie!" murmurs Alfreda, pouting, with a saucy expression of contempt, "a horrid *blasé* man like that; how can you think such a thing? A man who never thought about me at all!"

Mrs. Fuller smiles complacently; she can see, too, that her niece is happy, and through the veil of intervening years she looks back upon the days of her own youth and inexperience, and feels a friendly sympathy in the very simple Romance of Alfreda Capel's Engagement.

FRANCES SELOUS.

In the Watches of the Night.

I AM writing this account in order that it may be found when I am dead. That will not be very long now. My fate is swiftly overtaking me ; day by day the dark waters draw me ; soon the summons will come for the last time : I cannot resist, I cannot escape, if I would.

More than a year ago, I came as a probationer to the London hospital of St. Peter. I was placed at once in a surgical ward, and for the first six weeks my life was as miserable as only that of a newly joined recruit to the nursing world can be. Then I began to find my feet, to settle down to the swing of hospital work, and to discover the functions of my own little wheel in the machinery around me. Every one was very kind, my health stood the strain well, and I began to be thoroughly happy in my busy, stirring existence.

At the end of two months, the matron sent for me one morning and informed me that I was to be moved to a medical ward in a distant part of the building, the oldest block, where the great echoing stone passages were badly lit and heated and where it seemed like a long walk from one ward to another.

I was not displeased at the prospect of a change, and I began my work in "Alice" the next day. A week or two went by smoothly, and October drew to a close.

One dreary November evening a very bad case came up to the ward. The house physician was fetched in hot haste, and he shook his head as he bent over the bed.

"I should have been called before the patient was moved from the waiting-room," he said. "Where is the nurse in attendance? I must ask her a few questions."

"Run down to the waiting-room, Nurse Graham," said the ward-sister, turning to me. "Tell Nurse Tracy she is wanted up here at once."

I rushed off and flew downstairs ; there was a yellow fog outside, and it filled the corridors, which were more than usually dark and gloomy.

At that hour there was no one about; I did not meet a soul on my way.

I burst into the waiting-room. The staff-nurse was there, with her assistant probationer. At my entry they both started up in a half-scared way.

"You are to go upstairs at once, Nurse Tracy," I said. "The house physician wants to speak to you in 'Alice' ward."

Nurse Tracy looked along the passage nervously.

"Did you come down alone?" she asked.

"Alone? Of course. Make haste; there is no time to lose."

"This part of the hospital is so dark at night," she murmured, still delaying.

I looked at her in astonishment.

"I daresay your 'pro' will go with you if you are frightened," I said rather contemptuously. My own nerves were things which never troubled me. "I will stay and look after the room while you are gone. Only make haste."

"You are not afraid to be left?"

"What on earth should I be afraid of?"

"Oh—nothing,—only—it is lonely down here."

"Do be quick. Dr. Lawford is waiting for you."

The two went off together. I looked round for something to occupy me; there were some glasses to wash, and I busied myself with them. A quarter of an hour passed, and neither of the nurses returned. I began to be a little impatient. The silence was oppressive. Nurse Tracy was right: it *was* lonely. The hospital was closed for the night; I was completely shut away in that remote corner of the great building. Outside the fog hung heavily over the river, hiding the lights of the embankment on the opposite side.

Suddenly there was a short, sharp rap at the door.

I had not heard any footsteps approaching, I was startled, and involuntarily my heart gave a great throb.

"Come in," I said.

The person outside took no notice. Under any other circumstances I should have gone to see who was there, but I was becoming unaccountably nervous. I waited, more inclined to turn the key in the lock than to open the door.

The knock was repeated, a single rap, nothing more.

"Who is there?" I cried.

No answer.

"I am absurd," I said to myself, and taking my courage in both hands, I opened the door wide.

To my relief, it was only a woman who stood there. She was very tall, and her shabby black garments hung loosely on her gaunt limbs. Her face was half turned away from me, it was long and thin, and a peculiar droop of one eyelid imparted to it an unpleasant, almost sinister, expression. She wore something white round her neck, like a surgical bandage.

"What do you want?" I asked, wondering a little how she came there.

I had not heard the bell with which the hall-porter was accustomed to summon the nurses when an accident was brought in.

The woman did not speak; she stood, her head averted, as if she had not heard me.

"Who are you? What do you want?" I asked again.

Still no reply.

An uncomfortable thrill ran through me. Could she be a lunatic who had escaped from one of the wards? I had heard that such things had happened. I shrank a little from her.

"Will you tell me what you want?" I demanded for the last time, making an effort to speak sternly.

Then, at last, she turned her head and looked at me, and my heart stood still and my blood seemed to freeze under the horror of that awful gaze.

I never believed in hell before; but in that moment of overwhelming, sickening terror I knew I was face to face with a visitant from the invisible world: an evil spirit, a lost soul, stood there to drag me to destruction. There was no bell in the room. In the doorway, the silent horror in black blocked my exit.

I was paralyzed, fascinated with deadly fear; the devilish, triumphant glitter of those half-closed, stony eyes went through and through me; my heart had stopped beating: my brain was turned to ice; the Thing, the creature, seemed to be advancing upon me; I felt myself going mad. With a frantic shriek, I flung myself at the door; a bony hand closed upon my wrist; I was dragged violently into the passage. I could not struggle; I could not resist: I was in the clutch of a giant power. Oh the ghastly loathsomeness of that grip, icy-cold, irresistible, the grasp of

death on my warm, living flesh! Along the dim, yellow-lit corridors, on—on—I tried to shriek; no voice would come: only that fearful face was turned back on me. Now it was laughing—laughing with malignant, demoniacal glee ——

The river! Through a window I caught a glimpse of the dark waters flowing tranquilly along.

Was that to be the end of our wild journey?

"The river! the river!" a voice seemed to be shouting in my ears.

My stupefied brain rose to a last effort. I was dimly conscious that we passed a door. Madly I dashed my disengaged hand upon the panels; it was my last chance. There was a rush of light from within, some one's arms about me, everything whirling, and I knew no more.

When I opened my eyes I was lying on a sofa in the house surgeon's sitting-room, the matron at my side, and a group of nurses standing by.

"She is coming to now. What was the matter, my dear?" asked the matron, bending over me.

"The woman—oh! the woman in black! Don't leave me alone!" was all I could say, clinging frantically to her.

"What woman? There was no one there," said the doctor. "I heard a noise, and went out, and there you were in the passage, fighting with the air apparently. You have been overworking. You will have to go home and rest."

They were all very good to me. The matron stayed with me herself that night, for I was half delirious, and quite unfit to be left alone.

The next day she made me tell her my story, but I could see she did not believe it.

"You must have fallen asleep, and had nightmare," she said. "You are a little hysterical. You must take a holiday; and when you come back you will see how foolish you have been."

I was sent home for a month. Away from the hospital, change of scene and rest did much to efface from my mind the terrible impression which had been made upon it.

I began to think that very likely the matron had been right: I was in a nervous, overwrought condition. Nurse Tracy had frightened me with her hints; the doctor had seen nothing: there could have been nothing. Still at night I would sometimes

awake with a start, in a cold perspiration, dreaming once again of that clutch on my wrist, those eyes looking into mine, and then I could only light my candle and sit waiting for the morning to disperse my terrors.

It was January when I returned to my work. I found that I had been put into a new ward, far away from "Alice" and its associations. The nurses were all strangers to me. No one mentioned the cause of my long absence. There is little room in the life of a probationer for imaginary fears, and gradually I ceased to think of my terrible adventure. If my mind reverted to it at all, I persuaded myself that it had been a hysterical phantom of my over-excited brain.

The months went by. I came to the end of my period as probationer, and took the certificate which made me a fully qualified nurse, signing at the same time the usual agreement to remain as such for two years.

November approached once more, with its fogs and dark, damp days. Sometimes for a week together the sun never penetrated the thick curtain of smoke and mist which overhung the great city.

Our matron had left us, and the lady who replaced her was inclined, after the fashion of new brooms, to sweep very clean. She made our lives a misery to us by her unexpected descents upon the wards at unusual hours, and by framing sundry petty, worrying rules and regulations, with which her predecessor had never troubled us. No one dared remonstrate, as she was very ready to resent the slightest appearance of encroachment on her authority.

One day a redistribution of work was made. We were at breakfast in the dining-hall when the list of the nurses who were to be transferred from one ward to another was read out. I was not listening very closely, when the sound of my own name struck my ears :

"Nurse Graham for night duty in 'Alice' ward!"

I turned suddenly cold. Vividly there rushed back upon me the remembrance of what I fondly imagined myself to have forgotten. I seized the first opportunity to go to the matron's room. She was sitting at her table, looking worried and annoyed.

"Well, what is it now, nurse?" she asked before I had opened my lips.

"I came to ask whether you could put any one else in my place in 'Alice' ward," I said.

"Certainly not. You are the fourth who has come here in an hour to complain of the ward to which she has been appointed. I will have no more of it. You must all learn to be content with my decisions. You are too fanciful; you have been spoilt lately."

She would not listen to another word. That evening I came over to "Alice" to commence my duties as night-nurse. The ward is large and comfortable. It has two entrances, one at the end of the long room, the other through a glass door in the middle of one side, nearly opposite the big stove. The place looked so cheerful when I saw it, under the flickering firelight, that I felt my fears disappear. What could possibly happen, with so many people close at hand? I made a determined effort to conquer my nervousness, and in a great degree succeeded.

The first night passed off smoothly. I was not alone. At St. Peter's there are two night-nurses to each ward, and also a "runner," that is to say, a probationer who divides the night between two wards.

A week went by. I had become quite used to the work, always rather trying at first, and was even beginning to enjoy it.

Then only last night the second nurse came on duty looking very ill. She kept up until the house surgeon had made his last round, though she was obviously suffering greatly; then she gave in and confessed that she must go up to bed.

"I don't like leaving you alone, but the 'pro.' will be here in half an hour, if you *could* manage till then," she said.

It was a heavy ward, but there was no help for it, and she went off, leaving me to myself.

The patients were all quiet, and I settled down by the fire to roll bandages. I had been at work perhaps twenty minutes, when a curious sensation came over me. I felt that some one was looking at me. Involuntarily I turned my head.

Some one stood in the passage, looking through the closed glass doors, a tall, gaunt figure in black, with half-shut, glittering eyes and ghastly white wrappings round the neck. My God! what horrible fate pursues me in the shape of that devilish thing!

I was like a bird fascinated by a snake. Those awful, stony eyes, repulsive, yet in some fearful way attractive—they drew

me—drew me—I could not speak. All power was gone from my frozen limbs. I saw nothing, knew nothing, but that black form, standing with hand outstretched to drag me down—down—to the hall whence it came.

I had risen from my chair ; step by step, as if asleep, I moved across the room ; loathing horror possessed my every member : yet I was drawn, my will crushed, my brain dead. Already my hand was upon the door-handle.

“What is the matter with you ? Where on earth are you going ?”

Some one had seized me by the arm, and was shaking me violently.

The probationer had come in from the other ward, and the spell was broken.

I did not faint this time. In answer to her questions, I told her I was ill, giddy, anything to silence her and keep her quiet. I wanted time to think, to consider. I knew now that I was safe no longer. Twice I have escaped from the clutches of that devil, but the third time—the third time I shall not escape. This morning I made a last appeal to the matron to be moved from “Alice.” I was met by a point-blank refusal. I asked to be allowed to go away. That was also refused.

I came out from her presence knowing my fate. All day long I have watched the black river flowing beneath my eyes ; all day long I have seemed to feel the cold waters closing over my head ; that grip is on my wrist once more : to-night the summons will come for the last time. The forces of evil have hold upon me, and are hunting me to death. Shall I go mad, I wonder, before I die ? I will not have it said that I committed suicide. I have been murdered—murdered as surely as if I had been stabbed to the heart, done to death by devils and the powers of darkness !

My God ! what a fate is mine—to die—to die so young—in such a way ! It is very late. They will be wondering why I have not come down to the ward.

I am waiting—waiting here for the call. What is that ? Those eyes ! O God ! O God !

* * * * *

Some time ago the body of a young woman, dressed in a

nurse's uniform, was discovered floating in the river by some bargemen and brought ashore.

The foregoing extraordinary narrative was found in her pocket. The body bore no marks of violence, with the exception on the left wrist of *five large bruises*, like the impress of powerful fingers. A verdict of temporary insanity was of course brought in at the inquest.

The facts came under my notice as police-surgeon, and I had the curiosity to make some inquiries at St. Peter's in connection with the astonishing story left behind by the unfortunate girl. The authorities were at first extremely reticent, but I had the good luck to be acquainted with one of the house physicians, and on my showing him the manuscript he offered the following explanation of the events therein described :

Some years ago a woman was brought to St. Peter's by the police in an apparently dying condition. In a fit of jealousy, she had murdered her husband, and had then attempted her own life by cutting her throat. She was a terrible patient, resisting all attempts at treatment, cursing nurses and doctors ; and finally, finding herself recovering, she eluded her attendants one foggy night and drowned herself in the river beneath the hospital windows.

Now comes the incredible part of the story. A tradition arose, no one exactly knew how, that about the time of her death—that is to say, in the month of November—a figure resembling her had been seen about the hospital corridors, tall, gaunt, clothed in black, the neck bandaged, *exactly as Nurse Graham describes her supposed assailant*.

Whether this unhappy girl was really more sensitive to supernatural influences than those around her, whether she was really the special object of the attacks of a malignant spirit, as she herself believed, or whether she was simply hysterical and subject to delusions, I leave to the decision of those better able to judge. In justice to her, I have given publicity to her narrative. I offer no comment.

KATHARINE F. HILLS.

A Confession.

UPON the sand I traced my lady's name ;
We stood in summer twilight hand in hand,
My blue-eyed darling, who the prize could claim
From fairest daughters of our favoured land !

There twined our names in Love's encircling band,
Engraven till the jealous Ocean came,
Sweeping the spot where late we took our stand
Upon the sand.

Days passed : again that shore, that sunset flame,
Brown eyes in mine the answering lovelight scanned,
And in my heart rose joy, o'ermastering shame,
That I had writ that name, you understand,
Upon the *sand* !

H. DE BOCK PORTER.

A Matter of Course.

WE assisted once at a very funny wedding. It was in India, which, as every one knows, is a country where very broad ideas of hospitality abound. All Anglo-Indians are ready at a moment's notice to do each other a good turn. You write, for instance, to a man (it isn't at all necessary that you should know him personally) and tell him that you are going to his station in a few days, perhaps on your way to some new appointment, and you ask him to be so good as to put you up for as long as you will be there, and to provide you with say four dâks to take you in the last forty miles of the journey. This means that he must place four horses at intervals of ten miles along the road, and these carry you or draw you, each one ten miles, till you reach your destination. People ask all sorts of favours at each other's hands. My husband has had sick wives consigned to him to be forwarded per cheapest and most convenient line to England. He got quite clever at slinging palkees to yard-arms or cranes (the sick and helpless lady lying trembling inside), and getting them swung on board just as though they had been cases of hardware. But on this occasion the commission was of a different kind: we were asked to receive a bride from home, be a father and mother to her, and marry her to a young man from Assam, whom we didn't know from Adam. At least, the friends who were "chumming" with us that cold weather were asked to do this, so it came to the same thing.

Our friends, who had a nice house of their own, were bent on economy that year, let their house for three months, and took a little bungalow at Barrackpore; but when the time came when the cold-weather people began to arrive, and preparations for enjoyment began to be made on all sides, they discovered that they did not want to bury themselves in the Mofussil, and that they *did* want (Mrs. James did, at any rate) to enjoy the gaieties for which Calcutta is proverbial in the cold weather: and so they came and asked if we would have them.

Well, by dint of arrangement we managed it somehow, and had

a very merry time together. So thus it came about that when Mr. James received a letter from a man he had known years before in his bachelor days, asking him and his wife to befriend the young lady who was coming out to marry a young man that he (the friend) knew slightly, the Jameses had no house in which to receive her, and ours was stretched to its fullest extent. We held a council of war, and discussed how it was to be done. It never occurred to us to refuse. The idea was mooted of pitching a tent in the garden (our house was in the town, and the garden very small, but at a pinch it might be made to accommodate a tent), and for the Jameses to camp out there and give up their rooms to the bride ; but at last we hit on the idea of boarding her out at the Jameses' house, if the Brands, who had taken it for the cold season, would have her, and we would have the wedding from our house.

The young lady was on her way out, and would arrive within a week, so there was no time to lose. Mrs. Brand, as of course we expected, agreed to house the bride.

The bridegroom arrived in Calcutta and came to call. He was very bashful indeed ; he had been buried so long in the jungles that he had quite forgotten what English ladies were like, I fancy. He had been engaged for years to the young lady, and refreshed his memory of European women by looking at her faded photograph.

He said he hoped Mrs. James would be so kind as to go and meet the steamer at Garden Reach, so that the passengers might see that the bride had a lady friend to greet her on arrival, and Mrs. James said she would. The ship was to arrive on Saturday, and the wedding was to be on the Monday following. Mrs. James and I went over on Friday to see Mrs. Brand and to make final arrangements. We were talking matters over in the dining-room, and one of us suggested that we ought to have a wedding cake, but no doubt Miss Miller would bring one.

"Not she," said Mrs. James ; "she will expect to have it provided for her, but they are so awfully expensive, I really don't feel inclined to buy one."

"Of course not," said Mrs. Brand. "Oh, she will be sure to bring one : girls always do, even when they are not engaged ; but if *this* is of any use to you, you are quite welcome to it," pointing as she spoke to a rather shady-looking iced cake, the remains

of a dālī, or present, that had been sent at Christmas time by the baboos in Mr. Brand's office, and which had evidently been standing on the dinner waggon ever since Christmas.

"Oh, thank you," I said. "I'm sure we can make it look quite bridal with a little togging up." Mrs. Brand lifted the cake down and placed it on the table. The top was quite black with dust (it did not speak well for Mrs. Brand's bearer), but I suggested that it could be scraped, and the surface polished up with bread, and a cupid and a few crackers would hide all imperfections.

"By-the-bye, Fred has to go up country to-morrow," said Mrs. Brand. "I hope Miss Miller won't think it very rude of him to rush off directly after dinner, but, you know, the train leaves at nine, and it is such a long way to the station. We shall have to dine early as it is."

"Wouldn't it be more convenient if you all dined with us?" I said. "We are so much nearer to the station than you are, and then you won't be left all alone to chaperone the young people."

So it was arranged, the Brands, bride, groom, and all were to dine with us the next evening. Now, this is one of the greatest advantages of life in India (and they are many): when you are expecting people to dinner, you simply tell your butler that so many sahibs will dine with you to-morrow, and that he is to be sure he gives you a good dinner, and on the morrow, behold, a good dinner is served, and the mistress has not a moment's anxiety about it.

Alas for the good old days gone for ever! alas for the good cook who stayed with one for years, and whom one hardly knew by sight even at the end of the time! alas for the faithful butler, so respectful, so careful of one's comfort, who robbed one so moderately and in such a gentlemanly way! alas for the whole string of respectful, dignified servants, vanished for ever! How different is one's lot now! How many times have I screwed my courage up to tell the cook that we don't like raw potatoes, or the housemaid that she has left an island of dust on the piano, or that I like the brass taps to be bright, or that the windows should be cleaned! I have often set my wits to work to see if I couldn't invent a mechanical housemaid, or—but this will never do. I must not lose myself in this terribly vexed question; it will be settled some day by Act of Parliament, or

revolution, or something. I must get back to my muttons, my little bride and bridegroom.

The eventful Saturday arrived. Mr. Willis was in a state of pink and bashful excitement all the morning, and kept careering about in a "ticca gharry" between our house and the telegraph office. At last after tiffin he suggested that if Mrs. James didn't mind very much, it was about time she gave the order for her carriage to be got ready. She complied, and together they set out for Garden Reach. It was a drive of three miles, and Mr. Willis was wildly nervous all the way, kept telling Mrs. James that it was years since he had seen his *fiancée*, and wondered if she would find him much changed. At length they arrived, but they had to wait nearly an hour before the steamer was moored alongside the wharf. It was still early afternoon, and Mrs. James had no choice but to sit where she was, and when at last the gangway was run on to the ship from the bank, Mr. Willis said perhaps he had better go on board first, and he would come back in a minute or two for Mrs. James.

Well, Mrs. James sat on and on for two hours more. She saw all the passengers come on shore. There were crowds of them, and she was so interested in watching them, that she didn't notice at first how the time was going; then I think she must have fallen asleep, for no woman of any spirit, awake and in her senses, would consent to sit in a carriage for two whole hours, waiting patiently to be fetched, like a parcel left at a railway station. An army of coolies, laden with baggage, left the ship, there was a great babel of tongues, cries of "ticca gharry wallahs" touting for fares, but no Mr. Willis appeared, and after a while silence fell on the scene, and the darkness began to fall too. At last Mrs. James grew desperate. She began to imagine all sorts of dreadful things: that Miss Miller had perhaps not come, that she had proved untrue and had married some one else on the way, and that Mr. Willis the desolate, the broken-hearted, shrank from the task of breaking the terrible news to his kind, sympathetic friend. She could bear it no longer. She called to the syce to open the door; she descended from the brougham in no very amiable mood. "At least," she thought, "if Miss Miller *has* run away with some one else, that is no reason why I should be kept sitting for hours in a stuffy brougham, or why Mr. Brand should miss his train. It must be getting late." She made her way

as quickly as she could in the gathering gloom, stumbling as she went over the various impedimenta, now almost invisible, that littered the wharf. There was not a soul about; all was silence, except for the rattle of a donkey engine, on board the "Kaiser."

"A nice fool he has made of me" was Mrs. James' vigorous, though hardly ladylike, mental ejaculation as she nearly fell prostrate over some more than usually painful obstacle. "It was *so* important that the passengers should see that his precious Miss Miller had a lady friend to greet her." She crossed the gangway at length on to the quarter-deck. Here solitude reigned supreme, but soon a quartermaster appeared with a lamp. "Passengers, mum?" he asked. "Why, they've all gone ashore these two hours." But on Mrs. James explaining that there certainly *must* be a lady left and a gentleman he volunteered a search for the missing ones, and, sure enough, they were found at last on a bench in a remote part of the second-class deck, perfectly oblivious of the flight of time and of everything else in the world, the usually patient Mrs. James included, except their two precious selves.

Mr. Willis jumped up and was very sorry, he had no idea it was so late, and then he formally introduced his intended to Mrs. James, and finished with: "Mrs. James, my dear, is the kind lady who has undertaken the part of mother to you and come to meet you so that—so that——"

"So that the passengers might see you had a lady friend to greet you on arrival," put in Mrs. James maliciously. "We had better be going as soon as possible, Mr. Willis, for Mr. Brand, you remember, is going up country to-night, and we must dine early. You had better perhaps take Miss Miller to Mrs. Brand's, and I will go home, but promise that you will not be late for dinner. You are all going to dine with us, you know, Miss Miller. You will excuse my impressing upon Mr. Willis not to be late for dinner, won't you, as trains won't wait for anybody."

Mrs. James was very cross, and couldn't help showing it a little. She had thrown over two very pleasant engagements to come out on this wild-goose chase. "He is a naughty boy, Mrs. James," said the bride elect, playfully hitting him with her gloves, "but really I would rather not dine out to-night, thank you. It

is very kind of you asking us, but I would greatly prefer dining at home. I will tell Mrs. Brand not to mind me; she and Mr. Brand can go out, and perhaps she won't mind letting Willie and me dine at home together."

Mrs. James looked very blank at this, for among the inconveniences of Indian life (there are a few) is this: that if you have told your butler that you are dining out, you can't change your mind at the last moment and dine at home, for there will be nothing to eat, nothing of any kind at all, not even bread-and-butter. There would no doubt be bread bought for use next day and probably sufficient butter for *chota hasri* in the morning, and possibly an egg or two put by for the same purpose, but nothing else absolutely. And if there were food, there would be no one to either cook it or serve it, for the cook would have gone home, and the table servants would have started for the house where you had been bidden to dine, and the house would be left to desolation and the mate-bearer till such time as you might be reasonably expected home again. All this Mrs. James carefully explained to Miss Miller, who wondered greatly at the peculiar habits and customs of India, and Nelly James drove home fuming, leaving the lovers to make their way to Mrs. Brand's house in a *ticca gharry*, that one standing reproach to civilization in Calcutta.

Nelly's anger had somewhat abated by the time she got home, and she quite enjoyed the recital of her woes to our sympathetic ears.

"Well," I said when she had told me all, including the last straw about having to explain the impossibilities of dining "at home," "you haven't told me what she is like. Is she pretty, tall, short, stylish, dowdy, or what?"

"My dear, it was pitch-dark, past six o'clock, and I couldn't tell *what* she was like, but her voice was decidedly old-maidish, and, in spite of her kittenish gestures, I am sure she is forty at least. She was probably Mr. Willis's nursery governess, some one he has known all his life, and she is evidently the only woman he has ever had courage enough to ask to marry him. But we must be off to dress; it is nearly dinner-time now. I hope you have got the table pretty. We must let Madam Willis see that, though some of our manners and customs *are* peculiar, at any rate we know how to do things."

The table was very pretty, and quite met with Mrs. James' approval, but we had to scurry to get dressed in time to receive our guests.

The bride was an old maid, there was no denying the fact, but she was under forty, I think. She was a dowdy little thing, with nothing outwardly interesting about her, but she looked the sort of person to make an excellent wife for a poor man, as Mr. Willis undoubtedly was, if she could only keep her health in the abominable climate of Assam.

The evening passed off uneventfully, Mr. Brand caught his train, and the bride soon after said she was tired, and so the party broke up early.

The great day, Monday, the greatest and most fateful day that had yet dawned for two outwardly prosaic, commonplace people, broke without a cloud, as is the manner of cold weather wedding days in India. No anxious thoughts are wasted there on the climate; there are no dismal forebodings of drenching showers. Every bride that is married in India ought to be happy throughout her married life, for the wedding always takes place in smiling, not to say fiercely grinning, sunshine. We spent the morning as usual. All our simple preparations were made, and nothing remained to be done except to give a few directions to the khansamah, our valued major-domo, to have refreshments ready by the time we returned from church. The mâli (gardener) was busy arranging flowers all over the house, and produced with much pride a very stiff little bouquet, which he presented, with many salaams and a lively sense of backsheesh to come, to the flurried and perspiring bridegroom, who was breakfasting with us. It was received with gasping gratitude and no doubt a passage of coin, but Herbert Ainslie, Mrs. James' brother, who was to act as best man, murmured under his breath something about the beggar surely having arranged to get a decent bouquet for the bride. It appeared, however, that he hadn't, and Herbert went off to office in his high dog-cart wondering if Willis had remembered to provide himself with a wedding ring, or if he would expect Nelly or me to lend him one. I believe at my own wedding the best man, who was celebrated for his forethought, armed himself with a collection of rings, which he had borrowed from a jeweller for the purpose, and put one in each of his pockets, so that there should be no

awkward pause in case the bridegroom had forgotten this important article.

The wedding was to take place at four o'clock, and by half-past three we were all ready—the bride's father and mother (Mr. and Mrs. James), the best man (Mr. Ainslie), the congregation (my husband and myself), and the bridesmaids (Mrs. James' little boy and my little girl, both just two years old). The rest of the congregation (Mr. and Mrs. Brand) were to meet us at the church. Nelly James and I had each had a box out from home at the beginning of the cold weather, so we were able to rise to the occasion in the matter of clothes. The children had also recently been rigged out, and were both dressed in white satin, the little fellow in knee-breeches and silver buttons, with a plume in his cap, and Dorothy in a very prim-looking little frock, with a close bonnet. They looked such little ducks.

The mâli now came forward with more flowers—little sprays for the ladies and neat buttonholes of gardenias for the gentlemen. (I must diverge just for a moment to tell you another great advantage of Indian life : you keep a gardener to supply you with flowers. Perhaps you have no garden ; no matter, you have a gardener : therefore you have flowers, and all is peace).

The bride did not keep us waiting. She arrived to the minute on the arm of Mr. James, who had gone to fetch her. She was nicely dressed, but rather (both Nelly and I could not help thinking) as though she had expected to have a crowd of guests invited to her wedding. Perhaps we might have gone even that length if it had occurred to us, but we thought she would have come in afternoon dress. We were not prepared for the vision of white satin and orange-blossoms and veil, the regulation thing, that advanced up the large, bare church. There should have been a crowd of fashionably dressed people and a tail of bridesmaids instead of the two toddlers, who followed hand in hand with solemn faces, and tried hard not to tread on the bride's train. Something seemed to tickle poor Herbert's fancy, for he was in a state of suppressed mirth the whole time. Indeed, I think we were all in a state of nervous hilarity, except the two principal actors in the drama, who were in dead earnest enough.

The first part of the service took place at the entrance to the chancel, where two neat red cushions had been placed for them to kneel on, and when the officiating clergyman faced round and

led the way to the altar rails, a little incident occurred which sent the congregation into ill-concealed convulsions. Little Cosmo James turned round with a very solemn face to Dorothy and held out his hand ; she took it, and together they advanced to the place just vacated by the bride and bridegroom, where with one accord they knelt down and covered their eyes with their hands, as though in deepest prayer. The congregation quickly recovered themselves, but the children remained on their knees till the real bride and bridegroom rose from theirs. Nothing further occurred to upset our frivolous minds again, and we drove home to find that Luckhman had been equal to the occasion, and that the dining-room table had been daintily spread and decorated, *the* cake holding a prominent position in the centre. We had not left the decoration of this important item to him, but Nelly and I had together carefully scraped and polished off the dust. We had then made a little mound of soft paper, which we placed on the top and covered with maidenhair fern and eucharis lilies. We had put a new frill of silver paper all round, then we made a platform of books on a tall silver cake-stand, covered the platform with more ferns and flowers, put the cake on the top, and, behold, a noble and most pleasing erection, most grateful to the eye. Luckhman had made some very good ices ; and with tea and coffee, a few cakes and sweets from Peliti, and champagne (Fleur de Sillery, a sound wine, though light, Mrs. James and I had considered good enough), we thought we had done the affair handsomely.

There was a good deal of giggling at nothing, and I am sure the bride must have thought us either very light-hearted or very foolish. The babies were handed over to their respective ayahs, who swathed them with napkins and fed them with sponge-cake and milk in the background. Our light-heartedness overflowed as it had done in church when it was suggested that the bride should cut the cake. Herbert, who was in the secret, retired into a distant verandah for a moment and gave vent to a loud "Ha ha !" The bride, with a smile, took the silver knife from her husband's hand, and, after a good deal of exertion and the help of the gallant groom, an incision was made, and a large wedge of cake was gradually excavated. Mrs. James and I, and also Mrs. Brand, looked on in breathless silence ; we thought, perhaps, there might be a layer of "matrimony" under the sugar, but we

expected as more probable that the cake would prove what we used to call in our childhood a "shouting cake" (*i.e.*, the currants so far apart that they had to shout to each other), and also that the structure itself was so old and dry that, the light and air being let in, it would all fall to pieces like an excavated mummy. But nothing of the sort happened. There was, it is true, no almond paste, but the cake was a good honest Christmas cake from the Great Eastern Hotel, warranted to keep (uncut) for three months. (N.B.—This story is not an artful advertisement for the Great Eastern Hotel aforesaid; but if it should meet the manager's eye, and he would like to express his gratitude by sending me an extra-large cake *with* almond icing next Christmas, he can get my address from the Editor.)

The cake was handed round (the sugar was not eaten), healths were drunk in the cheap champagne, and the happy pair presently drove off "amid showers of rice and old slippers," as the society papers say. Nelly and I had forgotten these items, but the ever-thoughtful Luckhman had put a plate of rice near the front door, and my old ayah had hunted up some slippers.

Mr. and Mrs. Willis disappeared (none of us have ever seen either of them again) to spend their honeymoon in British India Street, an exceedingly modest, not to say poor, part of the city, and, I believe, left for Assam at the end of the week.

A few days after the wedding they came to call, but for some reason the "door was shut;" probably it was mail-day, and we were busy with our home letters: at any rate, we did not see them, so they left cards, "Mr. and Mrs. Willis," and two small wedge-shaped boxes addressed respectively to Mrs. James and myself. We both exclaimed on seeing them: "So the artful little creature had a cake all the time, only she was too clever to unpack it for the wedding! They were going to eat it in greedy solitude in Assam." But no, on opening the boxes were displayed two little slices of world-famed Great Eastern Christmas cake! The Willises must have bought the last remaining cake of the season to fulfil their duty properly as bride and bridegroom.

Now, I have an uncomfortable feeling that the foregoing little narrative is ill-natured. I don't mean it ill-naturedly, but merely as an illustration of the kind of commissions that dwellers in the far East are sometimes called upon to perform. But, if any one

should consider there is a spice of malice in it, I must say, in self-defence that none of us—the Jameses, Brands, nor ourselves—ever received a word of thanks from either bride or groom ; they took the whole affair as “a matter of course.” I know one must not expect gratitude, but if one does not get it one sometimes has one’s revenge.

A. J. K.



Crossed at Right Angles.

A STORY.

By S. J. DOUGLAS.

CHAPTER I.

"No! I will not have that girl under my roof!" said Lady Fanny Adare emphatically.

Her husband watched her movements anxiously.

"Steady with the teapot, dear!" he said. "You are not pouring the tea into the cups. There! I thought that would happen," as a cup was overturned; "tst! tst! tst!" rescuing the buttered toast from the flood. "Why do you wear those hanging lace things round your sleeve? Can't you pin them up somehow? They are always in your way."

"Never mind. Ring for Thomas," said her ladyship cheerfully as she used her lace handkerchief for a mop. "It's all the fault of these horrid cups, with their nasty, wobbly little feet. One can't depend upon cups with three legs and a butterfly handle, and I told you so, Miles, when you insisted on buying them."

"Well, but, Fan," said Agnes, "why this sudden idea about Gertrude Aylmer? I didn't know you disliked her."

"Oh, I don't dislike her," said Lady Fanny. "I've only seen her once in my life, but I feel sure she is a 'New Woman,' and of all silly idiots under the sun 'New Women' are the silliest to my mind."

"Do let us have one here," said Gervase Delvin, helping himself to cake. "I've never met a 'New Woman.'"

"All the better if you never do," replied his sister sharply. "Miles, what have you done with the sugar? A New Woman is a bundle of unhealthy, morbid notions. She is never happy, always whining or clamouring for something which she could get as easily as possible if only she went the right way to work and had half the gumption of an old-fashioned woman like me. Now, I can always get what I want without making a fuss."

"Ahem!" coughed Mr. Adare.

"Not without *you* making a fuss sometimes, darling," retorted his wife sweetly. "But that is no fault of mine."

"Better not attempt to argue, Miles," said Gervase. "Fan is bound to get the best of it."

"Of course I am," said Fan, nodding her pretty head and delicately sucking the tip of each slender finger in turn. "What a lot of butter they have put on the toast to-night! And so is every woman bound to get the best of it if she only stays quietly behind the scenes, and pulls the strings, and allows the men to think that it is they who are managing everything all the time. New Women spoil the whole game by shouting our secrets on the housetop and exposing all our little weaknesses to the public gaze."

"You acknowledge some weakness, then?" said Gervase.

"Of course I do," said Lady Fanny. "What would we women be without some little foibles and frivolities, pray? Hard, strong-minded, sexless abominations! You would all commit suicide to escape from us. I believe the fact of the matter is that all the unattractive frumps who can't get the men to pay any attention to them go in for being New Women, and hope to attract attention by posing as misunderstood and martyred and incomprehensible, and all the rest of it. Poor things!" And Lady Fanny threw back her dainty head and laughed derisively—the fresh, ringing laugh which was not the least of her many charms. "One thing I am quite sure of," she went on, "is that if the heroines of all these modern novels existed in real life, they wouldn't be loved and admired, and they wouldn't break the hearts of all the men of their acquaintance, as they do in the stories. I ask you, Miles and Gervase—you, as two good specimens of clear-minded, honest, sensible, manly English gentlemen—can you imagine yourself falling in love with 'Dodo' or the 'Yellow Dandelion' or that superfluous person who flirted with a ploughman? No, in real life any woman so extraordinary and hysterical and indecent as those three would be given a very wide berth by all *nice* men."

"What a stock of adjectives you have at your command, dear!" said her husband placidly. "Your eloquence is really most convincing."

"They used to muzzle women when they talked too much in the old days," said Gervase. "I have seen a sort of nosebag ar-

rangement, with a thing like a clapper to put in the mouth and hold the tongue down. It is since those wholesome forms of correction were abolished that we have been overrun with talking women. It seems a pity some of the old customs cannot be revived."

"Don't talk nonsense, Gervase," said his sister sharply. "You know perfectly well that if there is a man in the world who hates a woman to be peculiar or eccentric or loud, it's you!"

"I don't deny it, my dear girl," he said, laughing.

"Well, don't look at me and talk meaningly about nosebags, then," said Lady Fan.

"But, my dear Fan," said Agnes, returning to the point with characteristic persistence, "if your description of a New Woman is correct, then Gertrude Aylmer is certainly not one. She is a good-looking, unaffected girl, and every one likes her."

"She doesn't look happy," said Lady Fanny obstinately.

"I think she is very happy on the whole," said Agnes, "She never grumbles, though things are not as satisfactory as they might be at her home. Her father lost all his money, and they have to live in a pokey little house, with very few servants. Her stepmother is rather a funny sort of person, and she has such a lot of stepbrothers and sisters."

"When I saw the girl," said Lady Fanny, "it struck me at once that she was just like the girl one reads about in novels, with great, sad dark eyes, who has had some disastrous love affair and can't get over it."

"You do get the most remarkable ideas into that charming head of yours, my dear," said Mr. Adare, "and when once they are there, there is no getting them out again."

"She acts beautifully," said Agnes. "If you don't have her, who will you ask now that Maud has failed?"

"Oh, I suppose she will have to come," said Lady Fan, "but if she airs any of her absurd notions here, or talks the rot that girls do in novels, or swears, or wants to have brandies and sodas in the smoking-room, I'll show her what I think of New Women."

"She must be kept out of the smoking-room, certainly," said Mr. Adare with much decision, from the hearthrug, where he was warming his coat-tails by the fire.

"There is not the slightest fear that Gertrude would wish to

intrude into the smoking-room or anywhere else where she was not wanted," said Agnes with dignity.

"I don't care what women do—they may shriek on platforms, write improper books, ride bicycles, wear trousers, in short, do what they like—as long as they leave us the privacy of our clubs and smoking-rooms, and as long as they don't teach my wife and sisters and daughters to follow their example," said Mr. Adare.

"Hear, hear!" from Gervase.

"I don't know what it is they want," said Lady Fanny, looking fondly at her handsome, genial husband.

"*You* have everything that you want, at any rate," said Gervase to his sister. "But it does not follow that every woman is in the same happy condition. When you say women have nothing to grumble at, you speak of your own class, and every one will admit that it is their own fault if women in your class of life are not happy." He looked round the luxurious room, glowing with warm firelight, dimly lit by shaded lamps that left the corners and lofty oak ceiling in shadow, with the firelight flickering on the silver tea-things and on countless quaint and valuable ornaments and knick-knacks, with bright bits of colour, hothouse flowers, deep, comfortable chairs robed in Morris cretonnes, and in the centre of the picture the presiding goddess, radiant in delicate brocade and lace, with diamonds sparkling on her fingers. "You at least have all that the world can give you," he said, with a wave of his hand which included his substantial brother-in-law. "But you must remember that your class is a very small one compared with the enormous number of women in every branch of life who have everything to wish for."

"I didn't know you understood women so well," said his sister, laughing.

"The Lord forbid!" said Gervase brusquely. "But you didn't know what you were talking about."

"Oh yes, I did," said Fanny. "Of course, I know there are poor wretched women in the world, but it's generally their own fault to begin with. They marry the wrong man, or they don't marry him, as the case may be, or if it was not them, it was their mothers or their grandmothers before them. They come down in the world, and they take to drink, and so on. But a great deal

is done for them nowadays. Look at the societies and the clubs and the homes there are now, dozens of them! Why, I am President of the Girls' Friendly Society in this place, and I often go with May Wilde on Fridays when I am in town to sing at a mission place that she has for factory girls somewhere in an awful place in the East End. And she looks after a home for destitute women, too."

"It strikes me we have wandered from the point," said Mr. Adare. "We began with Miss Gertrude Aylmer, and now we've got to destitute women. I don't know if she is new or not, but I hope she isn't a case for a destitute home. I'm off to have a cigarette. Are you coming, Gervase?"

"No, don't go yet, Gervase," said Lady Fanny quickly. "Of course he's not coming, Miles. He isn't so anxious to leave us as you always are. He is going to stay and amuse Agnes and me."

"I think you can amuse each other without me," said Gervase, looking irresolutely at his sister, who was frowning and making frantic signs to him to stay. He understood her perfectly, but he was pining for a pipe and a comfortable chair in the smoking-room.

"Agnes doesn't care whether I go or stay, I am sure," he said wistfully.

"Oh no. Please don't stay on my account," said Agnes, with heightened colour.

"Stupid donkey!" said Lady Fanny viciously as the door closed behind her brother's tall form. "What idiots men are!"

"Do you think I ought to get a wig for the theatricals, or shall I powder my own hair?" said Agnes with composure.

Lady Fanny leant back in her chair beneath a tall pink shaded lamp, which cast a becoming light on her complexion of cream and roses. She gazed critically at her cousin.

"If you don't wear a wig you must have your hair done differently. You can't wear it as it is," she said, after a moment's scrutiny. "You must pull it forward and let it lie softly and fluffily round your forehead."

"Mother likes my hair brushed well back off my face," said Agnes. "She says people's heads are like birds'-nests nowadays, and if I attempted to wear a fringe I think papa would go out of his mind."

"Nobody wants you to wear a 'bang' like a factory-girl,"

said Fanny, clasping her hands behind her own fair tangled locks ; "but there is nothing more trying, even to the most beautiful face, than to have the hair dragged back off the forehead and plastered down flat, without a single curl to soften the outline, as yours is."

Agnes heaved a gentle sigh. "I sometimes wish dear mother was not quite so old-fashioned," she said. "Of course I like old-fashionedness, but still in the matter of clothes, for instance, I do wish sometimes that mother would let me have more fashionable things. She says big sleeves make me look as broad as I am long."

"Poor child!" said Lady Fan as she nestled complacently between two huge balloons. "Your mother is a dear, but she prides herself on not moving with the times."

Agnes sighed again gently, but she made no further complaint. As a matter of fact, the somewhat antiquated fashion of her dress and the severe style of her coiffure were by no means unbecoming to her slender figure and simple, serious face. She had a quaint and refined appearance which was more pleasing to an appreciative eye than mere prettiness.

"I am sorry you don't like Gertrude Aylmer," she said after a pause. "Although I don't see nearly as much of her as I should like to, she is one of my greatest friends."

"I never can understand that," said Lady Fanny. "You are so very unlike each other, and have been brought up in such totally different circumstances."

"I know," said Agnes. "But that is just why she interests me. My other girl-friends are all so like one another. They have the same ideas and tastes ; they live the same sort of lives, wear the same sort of clothes, talk about the same old things. Now Gertrude is like some one from another world. She has the most original ideas. Some of them are—well, rather daring, perhaps but mother thinks very highly of her. She says she is a very clever, interesting girl, and will grow out of her eccentricities as she gets older."

"I am sure she is an atheist, for one thing," said Lady Fanny, using the opprobrious term with the delicate disgust of an orthodox Episcopalian who has not the remotest notion of its real and tremendous significance.

"Oh, surely not!" said Agnes, intensely shocked, for she had

been brought up in the strictest Church principles. "What makes you think such a thing, Fanny?" she said.

Fanny shrugged her shoulders. "Oh, I can't explain exactly," she said, "several things. Once when somebody was talking about a clergyman—something or other he had done, I forget what—I saw by her face that she was dead against the clergyman."

Agnes laughed, with an air of relief. "Really, Fanny," she said, "you ought not to make such sweeping assertions with no more foundation for them than the vague expression on a person's face, which you probably interpreted quite wrong."

"I can't alter my opinion," said Lady Fanny. "I never can give reasons why I think such and such a thing, but I generally find I am right nevertheless."

Agnes continued her knitting in silence. She was always industriously occupied with a work of some kind, having been taught to believe that

"Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do."

Lady Fanny was troubled with no inconvenient sense of duty. She lay comfortably in a deep armchair, her hands in her lap, one leg crossed over the other, revealing more than a slim ankle, clad in black silk stocking, emerging from a mass of lace and muslin, while her mind seemed concentrated in the act of balancing a dainty buckled shoe on the end of her outstretched toe.

"Oh dear," she said presently, with a dainty yawn—most people don't look their best in the act of yawning, but Lady Fan did everything as prettily as a kitten—"I hope this party will be a success. Four ladies and eight men—a very fair proportion. I have had some experience as a hostess, and I have come to the conclusion that the great thing is to have plenty of men. There is nothing on earth so melancholy as a party where there are too many women. The men are swamped. They get low-spirited at once if they have to struggle with four or five women apiece."

Agnes remembered the annual stiff and dreary "covert shoots" at her own home, when men were always sadly in the minority.

"Most men are shy, you know," continued Lady Fanny.

"They like to be supported by their own kind; at least, the nicest ones do. I can't stand a man who likes to be the centre of an adoring circle of women, who laugh at every word he says, like a cock strutting about and lording it over a lot of silly hens. I hate cocks. They are the most insufferably conceited and domineering birds in creation."

"Don't men like to have a lady each?" inquired Agnes, who was rather dazzled by Fanny's evident familiarity with the proclivities of the masculine sex.

"No," said Lady Fanny, after consideration; "on the whole, I think they prefer to share one among several. You see, if they get bored, they can hand her on to the next man. And if a man wants to make himself agreeable to any one woman in particular, well, then he has to take possession of her in the face of all the other men. It adds zest to his pursuit of her if he has to win her from other men, don't you see? And it's fun for her."

Lady Fanny's eyes sparkled, as if she were queen of a tournament sending knights into the arena to fight for her favour.

Agnes listened to her dubiously. She had not been long, and secretly looked upon most men as so many bugbears.

"What a shy little thing you are, Agnes!" said Fanny after a short pause. "I notice that when the men come into the room you draw back into your shell like a snail and have nothing to say."

"It's not because I am shy," said Agnes, "but because I often cannot think of a remark worth making."

"Oh, say anything!" said Fanny. "Look at the way I chatter! Miles says the nonsense I talk is sometimes so ridiculous that it is quite sublime. Genius is akin to madness, you know, and Miles says when I'm really in good form, talking the most absurd rubbish at the rate of fifty miles an hour, I am quite a genius. Isn't that a nice way of looking at it!"

"I wish I could rattle on as you do," said Agnes, "but I couldn't to save my life."

"Except to people you know well," said Lady Fanny, "Gervase for instance. You seem to have plenty to say to him."

"Oh yes," said Agnes, her pale cheeks suddenly dyed pink, "but I have known him ever since we were children."

"Gervase admires you very much," said Lady Fanny, watching

keenly to see the effect of her remark. "He said the other day you were the nicest girl he knew."

"It was very kind of him," said Agnes composedly. She recovered her momentary confusion quickly, and lifted her candid eyes steadily to her cousin's inquisitive gaze. "I hope he will like Gertrude Aylmer," she went on; "nearly all his part in the play is with her."

"Yes," said Lady Fan, resigning herself cheerfully to the change of subject; "he has to do a lot of philandering with her. I am afraid he won't like it much; but Frank and Maud were to have done those parts, and when they failed I was obliged to give 'Raymond' to Gervase. He can really act very well if he likes, and he will look the part much better than Frank. Frank is not bad-looking—Maud thinks him heavenly—but I must say I think Gervase is the best-looking man I ever saw, though he is my brother. Don't you think so?"

"I never notice people's looks much," said Agnes. "If they are nice, that is all I think about. But I suppose Gervase is good-looking, now I come to think of it."

"I heard two women discussing him the other day," said Fan; "it was at a race-meeting, and I was sitting just in front of them. They didn't know who I was, of course. One said Gervase always made her think of a thorough-bred horse, in the pink of condition. I don't know if she knew much about horses, but she had a keen eye for a man. Then the other, who was evidently of a more literary turn of mind, said that, in her opinion, he was like a statue of a Greek god endowed with life and dressed by the best tailor in London. They thought themselves so clever, poor dears. When I told Gervase, all he said was, 'What a pair of—ahem—fools!' He was not at all flattered."

"I should think not," said Agnes.

"Oh, you needn't be so contemptuous," said Lady Fan, with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes, and she was about to continue her revelations with renewed zest, when she was interrupted by the sudden and violent bursting open of the door to admit a rush of obstreperous children.

There were only two of them, both girls, lovely as angels, but they made enough noise for six.

"Mummy! mummy! mummy!" they shouted at the extreme pitch of two pairs of healthy lungs; "here we are! we've come!"

And with this self-evident announcement they threw themselves bodily and simultaneously upon her, and half strangled her in the exuberance of their affection.

"My beautiful, beloved darlings!" she cried, clasping them in her arms and returning their frantic kisses with interest. "My own sweet pets! What ducks you are!" With truly beautiful, self-sacrificing instincts of maternity, she submitted without a murmur to be trampled on and pulled about, very much to the detriment of her gown and the total disorder of her hair. Hardly a cry was wrung from her, even when the pressure of a sharp little elbow or knee caused intolerable pain.

When she had been well shaken and pummelled and hugged, the cherubs turned about, and perpetrated a similar onslaught on the person of Agnes, who was very far from appreciating their attentions.

"The darlings!" said their mother with fond complacency as she watched the attack, and smoothed down her own disordered tresses. And indeed they were darlings, to all appearance, with hair like spun gold, blooming, peach-like cheeks, and curly dark lashes fringing the limpid depths of their innocent eyes, their fine, well-grown little bodies clothed in frothy-white garments.

They were called Cherubim and Seraphim.

In Agnes' opinion, the charm of their appearance was greatly modified by what she considered their shockingly noisy and unrestrained behaviour, and looking at them from the point of view that "children should be seen, and not heard," she could not conscientiously admire them. They left her ruffled and disturbed, and turned their attention to the sugar basin, and when it was forcibly wrested from them by their mother, because sugar was bad for their teeth, they drained the cream-jug to the last drop, and were proceeding to rifle the dishes of cake and biscuit when the servants opportunely arrived to remove the tea-table.

Peace vanished with the advent of the cherubs. They monopolized the conversation, and exacted the strictest attention to their desires from their doting mother, and they treated Agnes with caution, mindful of attempted snubs and resenting the disapproval which they clearly detected, though she politely endeavoured to conceal it.

Cherubim had just succeeded in secretly pulling out the pins from Agnes' knitting and entangling the wool round the legs of

two chairs and a table, when, with a shriek like that of a steam-engine, she picked herself up from the floor, and, joined by Seraphim, both children precipitated themselves upon their uncle Gervase, who made his appearance at the door.

"Uncle Gerry! Uncle Gerry!" they yelled, while Cherubim clasped his knees, and Seraphim climbed a chair and flung herself on to his back from behind.

"Be quiet, you little beggars!" he said, with affected severity. "Unless you stop shouting this very minute and behave like ladies, I'll go away again at once."

They stopped shouting; they stood on their feet. Each took one of his hands, and led him demurely to a chair by the fire.

Agnes was much impressed by the manner in which he obtained immediate obedience. She was still more struck when the little girls sat quietly on his knee, and talked so gently and prettily that she could hardly believe they were the same children whose uproarious conduct had distressed her a few moments before.

"Gervase is the only person who can keep them in order—the precious, *naughty* darlings!" said their mother, with fond pride. "They will do anything for him; they are so perfectly devoted to him."

Agnes picked up the stitches of her knitting patiently, and Gervase rose higher than ever in her estimation.

"Well, what have you been doing to-day?" he asked his nieces.

"Well, after breakfast we cleaned the mice," said Seraph, who generally took the lead in conversation. "There is *such* a lot of them, Uncle Gervase. They're *always* having young ones."

"And how is that ugly cat of yours?" her uncle said hastily, perhaps afraid of further revelations. He found himself out of the frying-pan into the fire.

"She's not ugly," said Seraph. "She's going to have some more kittens. We are going to ask Annie to shut her up in the cupboard, 'cause I think the kittens will come out to-night. Last time they came in the rag-bag. Cherub and me heard them mewling in the morning when we woke up, didn't we, Cherub?"

"Come here, Seraph darling," said Lady Fanny, trying to smother a laugh. "I have something to say to you, something very serious."

"I know," said Seraph, climbing on to her mother's knee. "It's about my nails. Well, talk away." She nestled her head on her mother's shoulder, and resigned herself with a sigh to listen to the old and tedious story.

"Yes, it is about your nails, darling," said her mother very seriously. "Look how they are bitten! They make Mummy feel quite ill to look at them. It's very, very unkind of Seraph to bite her nails when she knows Mummy can't bear it. Seraph ought to think how Mummy hates it when she is going to bite them, for if she loves Mummy, she will try not to do it."

She paused impressively.

"Well, go on, ducky," said Seraph, as much as to say, "Well, go and get it over."

"If Seraph only knew how Mummy hates to see bitten nails!" went on her mother. "They make her feel just what she feels when she shakes hands with a person in silk gloves. Oh! oh! it makes Mummy shiver all down her back—yes, Seraph, down to the very last bone in her back."

She looked down at her daughter to note the effect of her words.

The daughter stroked her mother's cheek gently. "Silly darling," she drawled lovingly after a pause, in a tone which expressed great affection, but profound pity.

Gervase went into convulsions of laughter, and Lady Fanny herself laughed, but Agnes could not see the joke. She thought the child ought to be sent straight to bed after such impertinence.

CHAPTER II.

UPPERTON, a town in the south of Scotland, could boast of little beauty at the best of times; and in late autumn and winter, when its rows of squalid little houses and back yards, and its dirty streets, were shrouded in perpetual rain and mud, it was a truly cheerless habitation. The inhabitants of the dreary villas and detached houses on the outskirts had no more cheerful view from their windows than sodden fields and dripping hedgerows. The surroundings were everywhere flat and uninteresting.

There was no living soul in sight—unless a flock of drenched sheep eating turnips in a muddy field be credited with souls—

when, on the same afternoon that the scene in Lady Fanny's drawing-room took place, two people met at the cross-roads a short distance from the town. It had been raining all day and though it had cleared slightly towards evening, the sky was piled with sullen clouds, which promised a fresh deluge before night. The road was a river of mud, and one of the two solitary pedestrians—a short, dark man, with waterproof and umbrella—picked his steps gingerly, with a disgusted expression of countenance, like a pussy-cat obliged to wet its feet.

His face brightened, and he forgot his damp trousers and the drip down the back of his neck, when he caught sight of the other pedestrian, a girl, who advanced steadily towards him, her hands in her pockets, her eyes on the ground, tramping sturdily along, oblivious of puddles. "Miss Aylmer! what a fortunate chance to have met you! You are very energetic to venture out on such a wet day," he said, hastily pulling off his woollen glove to shake hands.

"Not more energetic than you are," she said, taking her hand out of her warm pocket in a reluctant manner, as if she were none too pleased at the interruption of her solitude.

"Are you going far?" he inquired. He hoped not, for he wished to accompany her.

"I think I had better turn," she said, glancing at the lowering sky and the stretch of dirty road before her. "There is not much to tempt one to go further, is there?"

Mr. Allison perceived by her tone that she was not in the best of humours, and it was with some diffidence that he asked if he might walk with her.

She gave an ungracious consent, and they turned towards the town. For some time they tramped in silence, with the width of the road between them. Mr. Allison had the reputation of being a hard-headed, business man, but Miss Aylmer often made him feel nervous.

"I thought of calling upon your father this afternoon," he ventured to say presently.

"It would be a kindness if you would," she said, with a glance of gratitude. "He has not many visitors, and he cannot get out much in this weather. I hope you will come to tea."

"I shall be delighted," he replied with beaming alacrity,

and he was emboldened to offer her a share of his umbrella, but she refused it with decision, and relapsed into silence.

He was not distressed by the scant suavity of her manners. His admiration for her was wholesale. Everything she chose to do or say seemed right to him, and if at times her conduct struck him as being unlike that of other women, he only respected her refreshing originality the more. For instance, there was not another lady of his acquaintance who would have walked perseveringly on the opposite side of the road to him in complete silence.

He fell to admiring the neat, firm movements of her feet, incased in their sensible, if unbeautiful, boots, which she had managed to keep remarkably free from mud-splashes. He considered that her short skirt was both becoming and suitable to the occasion, and that her tweed cap, which would surely have been trying to most girls, sat upon her head like a crown. Little curls and tendrils of silky dark hair escaped from beneath it, and the healthy colour which exercise had brought into her cheeks reminded him of the geraniums in his mother's conservatory.

"Are we going to walk two miles to the tune of our footsteps in the mud, Miss Aylmer?" he said at last, for he was not without a sense of humour. "You might drop me a word or two now and again, as you would throw a hungry dog a bone."

She laughed half-heartedly, and said: "I am afraid I had forgotten your existence. I was thinking."

"I dare not offer you a penny for your thoughts," he replied, not at all offended. He would rather be forgotten by her than remembered by any other girl he knew.

"Oh, I'll make you a present of them," she said. "I was wondering how much longer I am condemned to live in this little place. I hate it with my whole heart."

Her tone of angry resentment surprised him. He did not quite understand what she meant, but he divined that something had vexed her. He wished he knew how he could console her.

"From my own point of view, I can only say that I hope the neighbourhood will not be deprived of your presence for many a long year," he said.

"I hope nothing of the sort," she said fiercely. "If I thought that it was my fate to live in this place all my life, I should

wish I were dead. But not buried over there," she added, smiling grimly as she waved her hand towards a brand-new cemetery, in the outskirts of the town, which lay before them.

Poor Mr. Allison did not know what to say. It would never do to laugh ; she would never forgive him. Besides, he was sorry for her. But he had a man's horror of "gush" and sentiment.

"It is very natural that you should wish for a change of scene," he said cautiously, hoping to soothe her. "All young things have a craving to stretch their wings beyond the parent nest."

"I am not so *very* young now," she interrupted impatiently. "I was six-and-twenty on my last birthday ; but for all I have seen of the world, or am ever likely to see, I might be a baby. What little I have seen of life only makes me long for more. I don't call existence in this stagnant place life. One might as well be a cabbage."

She was so excited and irritated that she hardly knew what she was saying, neither did she observe that her companion had crossed the road and was tenderly holding his umbrella over her. He was very little taller than she, and had to raise his arm to hold the umbrella at the proper level. His arm soon began to ache, but he did not care.

She talked on in the same strain, and he listened in great bewilderment, but with heartfelt sympathy. She had evidently forgotten to whom she was speaking, and poured out her woes with much volubility.

"Eight years now have I lived *here*," waving her hand over the prospect in general with bitter scorn, "seeing nothing, hearing nothing, doing nothing. I spend my time listening to twaddle and gossip, looking after exasperating servants, scolding spoilt children and mending their clothes, snatching an hour now and again to read a book, day after day the same eternal round, the same stupid little excitements over nothing, the same fuss over trifles that don't matter one single ha'penny!" The tearful emphasis on "ha'penny" was tragic. "Every day I go out for a walk, either into the country, till I am sick to death of these hideous fields, or in the town, where I know every tin pot and every stick of sugar-candy in every shop window. I know who lives here and who doesn't live there, and which cat belongs to what old woman ; I know that the butcher wants to marry the baker's daughter, and the U.P. minister's wife won't

“speak to the Free Kirk’s sister; I know that Mrs. Jones had a new baby last week, and Mrs. Smith the week before, and Mrs. Brown had twins the week before that, poor thing. Oh, how I hate it all.”

“But, Miss Aylmer, you are not always at home. You go away sometimes, visiting your friends.”

“Oh yes. I visit my aunt, who lives alone in an old house twelve miles from anywhere else, with an ill-tempered parrot. She takes me out for drives in a barouche, with two wheezy, ancient horses, that toddle along at the rate of two miles an hour. Then I go and stay sometimes with my cousins in London. They have ten children, and their house is in Bayswater—a nice, fashionable part of London, you know. And if I do go now and then to some nice houses among nice, well-bred people, I come home more than ever out of conceit with my own miserable, poverty-stricken home.”

“Not so bad as that, I hope?” he said, becoming distressed by her vehemence and anxious to stop her before she said anything she might regret afterwards.

“Not so bad?” she cried excitedly. “Worse! Isn’t papa always in debt? Have we ever any decent servants? anything fit to eat? hardly respectable clothes to our backs? Don’t we live here the whole year round? Have you ever known us go away for a change of air, as other people do? Are the boys being properly educated at that vulgar academy, where they pick up nothing but a vile Scotch accent? Do we live as a gentleman’s family should? No; we are worse off than a labourer’s family in a cottage. They know no better, but we do.”

They were entering the town now, and he had hard work to keep up with her rapid strides. The dirty pavement was obstructed by swarms of dirtier children, who ceased their noisy games to stare rudely at passers-by and make insulting remarks. Slatternly women hung out of windows, or lounged at street-doors, bandying oaths and foul jokes. The gutter was littered with bits of newspaper, orange-peel, egg-shells, dead cats, and other refuse. There was a powerful odour of leather from a tannery hard by.

Over the bridge and past the Town Hall, where the coloured letters of bill-posters had been converted into shapeless smudges by the rain, they came into the High Street—a dismal vista, in sole possession of two dogs playing in the middle of the road,

and a meek horse in a butcher's cart standing at the edge of the pavement.

Gertrude stopped suddenly before the large plate-glass window of a grocer's shop.

"Look at that!" she said, pointing dramatically at a neat parti-coloured arrangement of tinned meats. "Do you see that pyramid of Australian meat? As long as I can remember, for the last six years at least, that pyramid has been in this shop-window. Not a tin has been moved from its place all that time. Year after year the pile remains, exactly the same. I should like to go in and knock it all down and throw the tins at the stupid grocer's bald head."

Mr. Allison did not reply. He was distressed, for he considered that Miss Aylmer was uttering sentiments which were unworthy of her clear head and common-sense, and which he felt sure she would repent when she had recovered her temper. His silent disapproval checked her. She glanced at his face and grew red, and stammered an angry self-justification.

"I see you don't understand me, Mr. Allison. Of course it isn't the actual tins I mind, but that arrangement in the shop-window is just a type of the way life is conducted in this dead-and-alive place. There is a sameness about it that maddens me sometimes. I am in a mad mood now. I should like to turn everything topsy-turvy. Don't you ever feel like that?"

"No, I can't honestly say I do," he replied bluntly, "and I don't believe you often do, either. Something has annoyed you. You want to revenge yourself on somebody. Well, I am ready to stand in the middle of the street and let you take pot-shots at my head with the offending meat-tins, if it would relieve your feelings."

"You're laughing at me," she said, laughing rather shamefacedly, "and I believe I deserve to be laughed at. I am afraid I've been talking the most arrant nonsense."

"Oh no," he said gallantly.

"The fact is, as you say, something has annoyed me. I went out for a solitary walk to try and blow off steam, and, unluckily for you, you met me, and I have vented my wrath on you. I am very sorry."

"But I am not. I am only too delighted to be of the smallest service to you. I am glad to have acted as your safety-valve,

and I hope you will use me again in the same capacity if you feel inclined."

"Take care. You don't know what evil passions I cherish in my breast. You have had a revelation to-day."

"I should like to have many more," he replied, "though perhaps of a less revolutionary nature. I am a peaceable man."

She laughed. "You needn't be afraid. I never throw things at people's heads in reality."

They were entering the region of villas and detached houses, each in its own grounds, with its entrance gate and gravel sweep, its plot of grass, laburnum trees, and laurel-bushes.

"I am sorry you dislike Upperton so very much," he said as they walked side by side, more amicably than before. "I have grown up in the neighbourhood, and I have an affection for the little town and many happy associations connected with it."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Of course our house being some way out of the town makes a difference," he said. "I should not like to live actually in the town itself. But our business has been established there for generations, and ugly though it may be, I am not ashamed to confess a weakness for the home of my fathers."

"That's just it," she exclaimed impatiently. "I loved the home of my father's dearly. The happiest part of my life, when I was a child, was spent there. Now, as you know, it is sold. Strangers live in it, and we live—*here*."

She indicated, with supreme scorn, the house they were approaching. It stood at the end of a row facing a waste piece of ground, where an advertisement to the effect, "this ground to be let or sold for building purposes," was displayed. "Clive Lodge"—the name was painted on each gate-post—was a large-sized villa, with the dilapidated appearance of a house that is obliged to shelter a greater number of living beings than it is in reality adapted to accommodate. It had the shabby and out-at-elbows appearance of a cheap suit of clothes that has grown loose with long wear.

The paint on the doors and windows was rubbed away; the furniture was seen through the windows as if there was too much of it inside; the looking-glasses in the bedroom windows swung backwards; the blinds were awry; the handle of the door-bell was broken; everywhere there were traces of children's hands and feet.

Inside it was no better. Gertrude pushed open the front door and led the way into the entrance-hall. It was littered with hats, sticks, bats, tennis rackets, croquet mallets ; a child's toy horse and cart was under the table ; a perambulator was stabled behind the door ; a football hung on the umbrella-stand ; a cricket-ball rolled about the floor, to the imminent peril of passers-by. The mats were crooked ; there were marks of dirty boots on the linoleum ; a cupboard door was open, and disclosed an untidy pile of coats and rugs.

From overhead came the sounds of "Rousseau's Dream," practised by childish fingers on a cracked piano, with the same halting stumble repeated at the same place over and over again. Mr. Allison had noticed before, as a singular fact, that every time he entered the house he heard "Rousseau's Dream" in the distance. And what was that low, continuous rumble, like thunder muttering afar, that also assailed his ears with a familiar sound ? And why, oh, why, had the kitchen door been left open, so that a powerful odour of broth could wander at large through the house ?

Gertrude opened a door on the left, and put in her head.

The rumbling sound was heard louder than before, and Mr. Allison recognized the thunder of a treadle sewing-machine.

"Mamma," said Gertrude, "here is Mr. Allison, come to see papa."

"Don't bring him in here," said a voice hastily as the sewing-machine put down the brakes hard, and drew up abruptly.

"Is there a fire in the drawing-room ?" asked Gertrude.

"No, but take him up there. I will come in a minute."

"It will be so cold."

"I can't help that. The coals won't last till Monday if we are not careful."

Standing outside in the passage, Allison could see part of the room. It was the dining-room, and the table was apparently spread for the children's tea. Mrs. Aylmer was seated at the sewing-machine, and a small child in petticoats was crawling on the hearthrug, teasing a fat black cat, that was blinking its eyes at the mouldering heap of coal-dust which did duty for fire.

He began to fear that his visit was ill-timed, and would cause more inconvenience than pleasure. He imagined the conster-

nation that would be caused in the kitchen by the sudden necessity for five o'clock tea in the drawing-room.

"Please don't trouble about me," he said anxiously. "Let me go and see your father in his room."

"I think that will be best," said Gertrude. "We don't use the drawing-room much, you know. Why on earth can't the servants keep this door shut?" she added savagely as she closed the portal whence issued the smell of broth.

She led the visitor into a small room, overlooking the back yard, where, surrounded by tobacco smoke and newspapers, the master of the house was wont to seek seclusion from the cares and worries of domestic life.

"What is it?" he inquired testily as the door opened. But his expression of *ennui* changed to one of delight when he saw his visitor. He welcomed him warmly.

"My dear fellow! I'm delighted to see you! Sit down, sit down! Upon my word, you're a perfect godsend on a day like this. What with the rain and that infernal sewing-machine, I have been nearly sent out of my mind. Go and tell your mother to stop that hideous noise now, Gertrude. I can't stand it any longer."

He was a tall, aristocratic-looking man, with a very small head and delicately cut features.

He had been very handsome as a young man, before time and worry had furrowed his forehead and drawn down the corners of his mouth, and he had been one of the most popular and dashing officers in the service in his young days, before rash speculations had swallowed nearly all his capital and sent the family place to the hammer, before, too, his second wife had provided him with seven or eight boisterous children, to be alternately the plague and the pride of his advancing years.

He was one of those unintellectual men, their sole delight in youth having been in sport and speculation, who find themselves, when circumstances debar them from such pursuits, sadly confined in their choice of occupation and amusement. He had no taste for books beyond the newspapers and a sporting novel or two, and when the weather did not permit him to indulge in his daily game of golf, he was hard put to it to kill time. He openly envied the lot of busy men,

whose time never hung heavily on their hands, but he never attempted, or had ever been known to attempt, a stroke of work, though he often talked about it, since he left the army. He had dropped out of the acquaintance of most of his friends when he returned to Upperton on his last and heaviest reverse of fortune, soon after his second marriage, which had also helped to estrange him from his former friends, who considered that he had made an unnecessary and injudicious alliance.

He was a kind-hearted, easy-going man, whose charming manners won him popularity wherever he went, and few could resist him when he chose to advance the right hand of fellowship.

He was very fond of Allison, though their tastes were little in common. The younger man was, in virtue of education and character, the older man of the two, though Colonel Aylmer never suspected it, and was fond of giving him much paternal advice, and frequently aired his shallow philosophy for his junior's benefit. It distressed him that Allison could not be induced to take any interest in sport. The young man kept a confidential hunter, but he seldom hunted. He accepted invitations to shoot, but shooting bored him. He did not care for cricket or golf, he liked a game of football now and again, and he was fond of fishing, but his tastes lay all in the direction of books and art. He was passionately devoted to music, and played the piano very well himself.

The colonel had a poor opinion of the young man's tastes, but he respected his strength and integrity of character.

They whiled away half an hour very pleasantly, and then the colonel supposed, with the airy confidence of a man who knows of no difficulties in the domestic arrangements of his household, that tea would be ready in the drawing-room, and proposed an adjournment thereto.

On the way, he took his guest to visit the children, whose return from school had caused a deafening commotion shortly before, and who were now enjoying their evening meal in the

n of the broth which had already forced itself at one end of the table, and Gertrude was doling with a ladle. The children, boys and girls of 3, were eating too busily to speak. They stopped when their father and Mr. Allison came in, but

began eating again immediately, and grinned at the visitors over the edges of their spoons and the rims of their mugs.

"Don't bring Mr. Allison in here, papa," said Gertrude as she fell to cutting slices of bread, the tureen being empty. "It isn't a pretty sight. Mamma is in the drawing-room. I'll come in a minute."

"She's a good girl, that daughter of mine," said the colonel as they mounted the stairs. "The boys are obliged to have broth or meat of some kind with their tea, because they don't get a proper dinner at school. The very sight of it always makes me feel ill, but Gertrude goes and ladles it out and looks after the children like a pattern sister, as she is. She's a good girl."

"Indeed she is," said Mr. Allison, with great warmth. He thought of Werther's "Lotte" cutting bread-and-butter, and compared the picture favourably with that of Gertrude ladling out the soup, in a halo of steam, for her little brothers and sisters. The scene impressed him deeply.

"She leads a very dull life, I am afraid," said the colonel with a sigh. "It is one of my greatest regrets that I am not in a position to give her more variety and amusement. But she is a good girl. She never complains."

"She is a daughter to be proud of," declared Mr. Allison, so emphatically that the colonel elevated his eyebrows and smiled discreetly to himself.

The possibility of possessing a well-to-do son-in-law some day soon was a distinctly pleasing prospect.

CHAPTER III.

GERTRUDE kept a diary. It was not a bald record of fact, nor was it written regularly; only she wrote when the spirit moved her to do so. It generally moved her when she was in low spirits, suffering from depression consequent on a disagreement with her stepmother, or from reading too much poetry, or when the trivial worries of housekeeping had bored her to the verge of hysterics. She was not at all philosophical, and could not take the worries of life calmly, or learn to regard them as trifles unworthy to ruffle the serenity of a well-balanced mind.

The diary was a remarkable document, containing the record of many moods, of temper, of melancholy, of occasional ecstasies of rapture, infatuation for certain people, with fits of moralizing at intervals.

Its language was painfully slipshod, and if any eye but the writer's had been privileged to look between its covers, laughter might have been excited instead of tears.

Gertrude herself was aware of its discrepancies, and frequently amused herself greatly in reading "back numbers."

It would be unfair to give extracts as indications of her character, for in self-analysis she was prone to be over-severe, maudlin, mock-heroic, morbid, incoherent, and otherwise untrue to her real character.

On the evening after George Allison's visit, she wrote :

" I believe I shall have to marry George Allison sooner or later. I don't care for him much ; he is not in the least my ideal of a man ; but he is good and kind, and well off, and I am never likely to have a more suitable offer. I suppose I had better take the chance when I get it. I like good old George ; sometimes I am even a little bit in love with him ; but oh, I do wish he was better-looking ! As Mrs. Poyser said of Craig, ' I've no fault to find with George, but it's a pity he couldn't be hatched over again, and hatched different.' It's just my luck. I like tall, fair men, who are fond of horses and sport ; and, of course, I shall marry a short, dark man, who doesn't know a horse from a cow. That's a woman's fate all over. Well, I believe I could be very happy with him. I am beginning to be excited at the prospect. I wonder when he will ask me. He will take a long time screwing up his courage. I must be civil to him."

A few days later she wrote as follows :

" Got an invitation this morning from Lady Fanny Adare to act in her theatricals next week. I don't much want to go ; but perhaps it will be fun. I met her last year at Belton ; she came for a night when I was paying my annual visit to that stately abode of pomposity and kindness. I suppose Agnes told her I could act. George Allison was here to-day, and is coming again on Saturday. I believe I am growing quite fond of him. "

CHAPTER IV.

THE gong had sounded for dinner at least a quarter of an hour before Gervase Delvin strolled into the drawing-room, where most of the party were already assembled. His demeanour was calm and unruffled. He was not afraid of being late, for Lady Fanny had not lived for nearly thirty years without impressing

upon all her relatives and friends the fact of her incurable unpunctuality. All who knew her had long ago given up expecting her ever to be in time, and even her husband's methodical and order-loving nature had, after prolonged struggles, despaired of effecting a reform, and was obliged to submit to her irregularity with as good a grace as might be.

This evening, however, she happened to be down in very good time. Gervase perceived her as he entered the room, the centre of a group of men on the hearthrug, the long tail of her gleaming yellow gown covering yards of the carpet behind her, while she discoursed with much charming animation and emphasized her remarks with a feathery fan.

"I told all you men to come down in hunt-coats," she said, apostrophizing the four or five men who stood with their backs to the fire. "I know you all hunt—or you ought to, if you don't—and at this time of the year, when you have a chance of looking ornamental for once in your lives, it's too bad to come down in your old 'blacks,' that one sees all the year round. Captain Taylor, may I ask why you have disobeyed my express wishes?"

She addressed the stranger of the party, a man who had never met his charming hostess before.

"I'll put it on to-morrow, Lady Fanny," he mumbled apologetically, "if my fool of a servant hasn't forgotten to pack it, which I rather think is the case."

"You must wire for it, if it hasn't come," she said with the pretty air of command which suited her piquant style so well. "I was so pleased that I had secured four hunting men for my party, and I thought my dinner-table would look quite bright. Why, I chose my gown of this very colour because I thought it would go well with pink. Ah, here is Gervase. He is all right."

"Am I late?" inquired Gervase casually.

Lady Fanny counted heads rapidly. "Little Mr. Traill is not here yet," she said.

"Then send for him, my dear," said Mr. Adare testily. "I am not going to wait any longer for the young jackanapes. The soup will be stone-cold."

"If you go down without him," said Lady Fanny, in tragic tones, "I won't answer for the consequences. He is a most touchy individual, and if you offend him he will probably throw

up the theatricals altogether, and refuse to go on with them. We must really be civil to him until they are safely over."

"Confound the theatricals! I wish they *were* safely over," muttered Mr. Adare, fidgeting angrily to and fro.

Gervase glanced round the room in search of Agnes. He had lately contracted a habit of looking for her when he entered the room. He had been fond of her when they were children, and now, when both were grown up, it seemed probable that they would drift into closer relationship. At all events, he thought of her as the nicest girl he knew, one who could be depended upon always to behave in a gentle and dignified manner, becoming to his notions of a true lady. She would make any man an admirable wife. He had no great opinion of most of the other girls of his acquaintance. If they were nice, they were probably shy; if they were not shy, they were mostly empty-headed; if they were amusing, they were apt to be fast. The idea of marriage had long been abhorrent to him—an evil to be postponed until the last possible date.

But he supposed he should marry some day, and every finger of fate seemed to point to Agnes as the most suitable bride he could choose. Not only was she a very nice girl, but she was the only child of rich parents, and would have a comfortable fortune of her own, a most important consideration, money being a commodity with which he was himself but meagrely endowed. If she was good enough to care for him sufficiently to provide the means of housekeeping and accept his heart, which was the only valuable article he had to offer in exchange, he was not averse to strike the bargain; but there was no hurry.

There was destined to be a break in the slow current in which he was being gradually drifted into the safe harbour of matrimony with Agnes.

As he stood on the hearthrug, looking round the spacious room and scanning carelessly the groups of well-groomed men and women, his attention was arrested by a girl who was sitting a little apart from the rest, dressed in black, with her hands lying quietly in her lap. There was something distinguished in her appearance, either in the subtle grace of her attitude, or in the pose of her head, or the expression of her handsome, interesting face as she leaned forward to listen to the conversation, which attracted him immediately.

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There have been no rules yet discovered to explain the workings of the law of attraction between man and woman. Two persons in a crowd are drawn together by some invisible magnet, and no one can tell why.

Gervase was by no means unduly susceptible, and had passed unscathed among better-looking and "smarter" women than that girl in black. But why try to explain the attraction? Enough that he was attracted.

As for Gertrude, she had been watching the people as they came into the room with a quiet interest, which was roused to no special degree until the tall, fair man, in his red coat, strolled in last. Then, though she only glanced once at him, she knew at once that he alone of all the other immaculately shirted, politely behaved young men was likely to excite her special interest.

"What the devil is that fellow doing?" burst out Mr. Adare, whose impatience was rapidly assuming ferocious proportions.

"The young people need a deal of patience, Miles," remarked grimly Miss Bertha Lacy, the fourth lady of the party. "When you and I were young things that had just learnt to wipe the milk off our own mouths, we didn't keep our elders and betters waiting for us; but nowadays there are no 'betters,' only 'elders,' or 'old fogies,' rather."

"I'll 'old fogey' this young man if he doesn't look sharp," said Mr. Adare, pacing restlessly up and down.

"These babes and sucklings need putting down with a firm hand," said Miss Lacy, sitting bolt upright on the sofa, and putting on a comically vindictive expression which made every one laugh.

She enjoyed the reputation of being a wit, and was considered vastly amusing, because she invariably "spoke her mind" in a cracked, rasping voice. Moreover, she was one of those lucky people who are blessed with a countenance of grotesque solemnity, on which their fellow-men cannot look without being excited to laughter. The lines of such faces lend themselves naturally to the expression of humour, and seem to be the living embodiment of the comic element in life.

There were persons who asserted that Bertha Lacy's humour consisted in saying coarse and vulgar things and abusing her friends; but such were probably sufferers from the lash of her

sharp tongue. She was an incessant talker and a great favourite with hostesses, for if she were present there was no fear that the conversation would flag. She went "everywhere," and amassed a store of gossip which was never exhausted, and on which she drew with great liberality for the benefit of those whom for the moment she was entertaining.

She dressed in an antiquated style, quite in keeping with her quaint and homely personality. Her gowns were always made of such rich materials that they never wore out, and were quickly outstripped by the fashions, a consideration for which their wearer cared "not a jot or a tittle." Her hair was a marvel to behold. On her forehead she wore a threadbare fringe of tight curls like a door-mat, quite independent of the rest of her hair, which was plastered smoothly to the back of her head, where it was met by a symmetrical basket-work of plaits, like the round top of a diminutive linen basket. She invariably wore a variety of clattering necklaces and bangles, and in the day-time her trim waist was girt with a silver-mounted Norwegian belt, from which dangled a collection of small scissors, knives, pencils, button-hooks, etc.

In the evening she wore a selection of gowns which all her friends knew well. Even men, usually so dense in the observation of feminine attire, could not fail to recognise as old acquaintances the prune satin, the black striped silk, the bottle-green velvet, and others.

"I'd make the young man tuck in the tails of his shirt double-quick time if I was behind him," she remarked, sitting bolt upright on the edge of the sofa, as Mr. Adare again demanded to know how much longer the soup was to wait. "Ah! here he is at last," she went on as a very pale and timid boy hurried into the room, with many apologies. "He ought to be spanked."

"I am afraid that barbarous form of correction has gone out, Miss Lacy," said Mr. Bertie Herries, the young man who was deputed to take her down to dinner, as he offered her his arm. "Only clergymen lick their kids nowadays, I believe; at least, so the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children says."

"Cruelty to children!" snorted Miss Lacy. "I wish there was a Society for the Suppression of Impudent Young People. It's badly needed."

"You're too hard on us poor young¹ things," said Bertie, who was a cool youngster, with a tolerable idea of his own sharpness, but imperturbably good-natured. "The older folk must bustle up if they want to keep abreast with the times."

"I like that!" said Miss Lacy. "I suppose you look upon life as a race, in which you youngsters lead the way while we older ones pant and puff in the rear as best we may. All very well, my dear young man! You go on ahead if you like, and flounder into bogs, and tumble into ditches, and cover yourselves with mud, and think you are covering yourselves with glory, finding out new paths to new places. We older ones know a thing or two worth six of that. We jog along contentedly in the beaten track, laughing in our sleeves and ready to give you poor deluded young things a helping hand out of the bog when you've found out your mistakes."

"Oh, well, I suppose it all comes to the same thing in the end," said Bertie vaguely.

"It's all the same in one sense," said Miss Lacy sharply. "What's that quotation? 'The donkey cannot change his hide or the leopard her spots.' Whatever happens, you will never change your hide, and I shall have my old-fashioned spots till the end."

"Never mind if Bertha gets abusive," called Lady Fanny down the table. "She has to say funny things, and we all have to be victims in turn."

"Oh, I haven't fallen a victim yet," said Bertie coolly.

"Have you met Bertha Lacy before?" said Lady Fanny, turning her soft, dark eyes full on Captain Taylor, who had managed to secure a seat beside her.

"Yes, once or twice. She is very amusing, isn't she?" he replied.

"Yes, very, especially when you first know her. One gets a little tired of her stories when one has heard them two or three times."

"I confess she is not the sort of woman that attracts me," said the Captain. "I like a woman to be gentle, sympathetic, and—and pretty. Miss Lacy might be a man."

The man on the other side of Lady Fanny was left to enjoy his dinner as best he might without more than a casual word at rare intervals from his hostess, for she made it her duty to show

Captain Taylor that there were no points of resemblance between herself and Miss Lacy.

Gervase had taken Agnes in to dinner, but they said very little to each other. Agnes had suddenly grown shy, and Gervase was content to join in the general conversation without trying to make himself specially agreeable to her. He caught himself constantly looking across the table at the girl in black and listening for her voice. He wondered what Mr. Gresham had said to make her smile with such genuine amusement, and when she laughed he wished he knew what had tickled her imagination. He noticed the curve of her white throat as she turned her head, and the soft, dusky tendrils of hair behind her small ear. He admired the plain black dress that showed up the warm whiteness of her skin and the touches of red and scarlet in cheeks and lips.

Gertrude looked her best, for she was in high spirits. She found herself in a warm, well-lighted, bright-coloured, merry world, and the babble of frivolous talk and laughter sounded like music in her ears. She could hardly believe that it was only last night she had been sitting at a comfortless meal with her parents, who had discussed the discrepancies of the cook and baby's sore throat.

She felt sure that she was going to enjoy herself just as she smiled, and with this pleasant conviction she met Gervase's eyes across the table. He smiled too, and made up his mind to go and talk to her at the first opportunity.

(To be continued.)

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A Modern Comedy of Errors.

By DARLEY DALE,

Author of "THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH," "THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT," etc.

CHAPTER XI.

"A LITTLE AVERSION."

MISS DURSLEY left the court in floods of tears after the conclusion of the trial. Her examination had not been a long one, for Dr. Dursley's counsel, seeing how difficult she found it to control herself sufficiently to speak distinctly, made it as brief as possible. Her real difficulty was to answer the questions put to her without perjuring herself; and the only way she could do this was to say that to the best of her recollection she had made up the pills according to the prescription; she was always most careful so to do, but it was quite possible she had on this occasion made a mistake. She had no knowledge of the properties of the drugs she dispensed, and until the fatal accident occurred had no idea how much opium was given as an ordinary dose.

Poor Dorothy had been inwardly torn in pieces during her ordeal; on the one hand was the fear of inculpating Sir Peter inadvertently, on the other of increasing Paul's guilt if she laid too much stress on her ignorance, and on both sides her fear of telling a downright falsehood. She had a very tender conscience, and she could scarcely reconcile herself to the part she had to play, even for the sake of saving the great doctor's reputation, hence her tears.

The sentence was lighter than she, or indeed any one, had anticipated, but for all that it was a heavy trial to her, for she would have gone to gaol in Paul's stead quite as willingly as the great doctor, unknown to her, had done. She had to drive herself and Fly home, for the groom was out with Dr. Crofton, and Paris required all her attention, so she could not indulge her

tears nor her self-reproaches on the way, unless she ran the risk of being thrown out of the dog-cart or run away with ; for the mare, missing her master's hand and voice, was in a very skittish humour, and Miss Dursley was, as she said, thankful for small mercies when she reached home in safety.

Before she went to the trial that morning she had dispensed Paul's medicines as usual, much to the surprise of Dr. Crofton, who came into the surgery while she was so engaged, and left it abruptly on finding her there. She had been too full of thought for Paul to notice his surprise or his annoyance on this occasion, and if she had not felt tired and miserable would have offered to make up his medicines that evening. Conscious that she had never made a mistake and that Sir John Dane's accident was due to Sir Peter, not to her, neither she nor Mr. Dursley had seen any reason why she should not continue to dispense the medicines, but, as she was to discover, Dr. Crofton took a different view.

The governess who came with Sir Peter's children was a nonentity, a little plain woman of uncertain age. She was evidently dreadfully afraid of both Sir Peter and Dr. Crofton, and was much too shy and nervous to suffer herself to be drawn into any conversation in the presence of either, and as Dr. Crofton was a very silent man, Miss Dursley soon found the meals were a trial to her, particularly the late dinner, when none of the children were present.

This first evening she was not inclined to talk much herself, except to keep wondering what poor Paul was doing, how he felt, what he was eating, what effect the confinement would have on him what sort of a bed they would give him, and whether he would be able to sleep. In all this Dr. Crofton appeared to take a civil interest. If he felt any sympathy for her or Mr. Dursley, he gave no expression to it, and Miss Sanders did not hazard a remark.

"Dear me!" said Miss Dursley to herself when she found herself alone in the drawing-room, Miss Sanders having retired and Dr. Crofton choosing to remain in the dining-room, "dear me! What a cheerful time I shall have with these two! As for her, I should like to shake her. I can't think why Peter ever engaged such a poor, plain, uninteresting creature ; I suppose, though, she was his mother-in-law's choice, and doubtless she had her reasons

As for Dr. Crofton, I have not gauged him yet; he is dreadfully reserved, so we are not likely to get on; and his silence will be a great trial to me. We are evidently not congenial spirits; he looks very delicate, but he is just one of those men who resent being taken care of. However, I mean to do my duty to him in that way, though it will be no pleasure to me to look after him, as it is to look after dear Paul. I wonder if he will ask me or tell me anything about the patients; there must be lots of things he would like to know. I think I shall tell him to-morrow if he wants to know who all the people are, he must ask me."

Meanwhile the unconscious object of these meditations was sitting with a new volume of poems before him, to which, however, he was not paying much attention, but was thinking of his new position and inwardly resolving what line he intended to take; he finally decided that he should not brook the least interference with professional affairs from Miss Dursley. If her brother chose to run the risks he had done by allowing her to help him, he might do so, but he, Michael Crofton, should never even allude to the practice or the patients in her presence.

Thus musing, he fell asleep, the strong Eastfolk air through which he had been driving having made him sleepy, and he did not wake till past ten, when Miss Dursley entered the room.

"I beg your pardon, Dr. Crofton; there is a message from a lady in the next village. She is a very fanciful woman, and there is not the slightest need to go to-night; you are tired, and in all probability it is only a slight hysterical attack, which will be over before you get there. Shall I send word you will go in the morning?"

"Thanks, I'll see the messenger myself," said Dr. Crofton, deciding to ignore her advice and go that night, merely for the sake of asserting at once the independent position he intended to take.

And, late as it was and tired as he felt, he ordered James to harness a horse and drive him, which commands that worthy obeyed as sulkily as possible, and confided to Fly that if this was going to be the game with the new doctor he should give notice, for he would not put up with it. And Dorothy, hearing Dr. Crofton had gone, laughed her pretty, merry laugh, and wished Paul was there to share her merriment.

The next morning was cold and chill out of doors, breezy first

and lowering afterwards within, and the weather indoors was Dorothy's fault, as she confessed to herself.

In the first place, she could not resist inquiring the result of his visit at breakfast.

"Well, Dr. Crofton, and how did you find Mrs. Slade last night?"

"I have hopes of her recovery," said Dr. Crofton gravely.

Dorothy trilled out a laugh.

"Confound the woman, how fond she is of laughing! I suppose she knows she *can* laugh," thought Dr. Crofton.

"I told you so, but you would not believe me," laughed Dorothy.

Dr. Crofton did not answer, but finished his breakfast in silence.

If the woman must be so obstreperously happy, she might at least have the decency to wait till luncheon before she broke out into such hilarious expression of her happiness; such mirth at such an hour in the day as half-past eight was most ill-timed, to say the least of it. Only the very young and the very healthy could feel in such high spirits so early in the day, and Dorothy Dursley was not very young; so Dr. Crofton resented her mirth and condemned it as unnatural, seeing that her brother was in prison, and knowing that it was directed against himself.

Mr. Dursley's usual routine was to see patients in the surgery till ten o'clock, prescribe for them, and leave Miss Dursley to make up their medicines while he went his rounds; he then visited patients in the town, and came in with more prescriptions at eleven, when he started for the country journeys.

At ten that morning Miss Dursley went as usual to the surgery and knocked at the door, which Fly opened. The new doctor was dispensing some medicine for an old man who was waiting for it, and there were still seven or eight people in the waiting-room.

"Oh, Dr. Crofton, I thought you knew I always dispense the medicines for my brother, and then he is ready to start on his rounds at ten o'clock. If you leave me directions, I will do it for you."

"Thank you, but I will not trouble you; I prefer to do it myself," said Dr. Crofton.

"I am afraid you will find it will make you very late in start-

ing on your rounds, and there is a ten-mile journey to-day, I know, but just as you please. If you want me at any time, I shall be happy to help you ; I shall be in the garden."

And before Crofton had time to answer she disappeared.

"What a stubborn little creature he is ! He will never get through his work if he is going to waste half his morning doing what I could do equally well," thought Dorothy, as she went to the greenhouse for a morning's gardening.

Dr. Crofton, however, was very quick in everything he did, and soon despatched the remaining patients. He left word he might be half an hour late for luncheon that day, but they were not to wait for him.

Miss Dursley paid no attention to this prohibition, but ordered luncheon half an hour later. She was not going to have a delicate man like Dr. Crofton sitting down to lukewarm mutton and sodden potatoes. If he did not know what was good for people who suffered from dyspepsia, she did. So when the new doctor came home he found himself just in time for the midday meal.

He was very silent, but whether he was not well or whether he was out of temper Miss Dursley could not discover ; she did not venture to ask him where he had been, and he did not vouchsafe to tell her.

A few days later he asked her if there was any chance of his being admitted to see Mr. Dursley if he went to the prison and asked leave.

"Not the least chance. My brother won't even let me go to see him during his imprisonment, nor will he answer any letters—he hates letter-writing—but I can't understand his reason for not wishing to have any visitors. However, he was most decided about it."

"It is very awkward indeed, very. However, if that is the case I must do the best I can."

"Is it anything I can tell you ? I know most of the patients almost as well as Paul."

"No, thanks," said Crofton, who would almost have died before he would have asked Miss Dursley anything concerning the practice.

"Stupid little man, giving himself such airs ! However, I'll be even with him. He may not ask, but that is no reason I should not tell what I am sure he is longing to know ; so I'll

just find out from James whom he is visiting, and then casually refer to them. Perhaps he will be trapped into asking a question now and then."

This plan answered admirably. Dr. Crofton fell into the trap, and flattered himself that circumstances favoured him and enabled him to find out all he wanted to know in a casual way, thanks to Miss Dursley's inveterate habit of gossiping about the patients, as he mentally characterized Dorothy's method of helping him out of his difficulties.

So, while he was blessing that unspiritual god, Circumstance, Dorothy was laughing at him in her sleeve; but, though she laughed, she told herself he was a very difficult man to live with, and she wrote to Paul and told him she had reason to be thankful good temper was generally considered one of her strong points, or there would certainly be a battle royal between her and his *locum tenens*. She added that she had quite made up her mind that when he was released she should go away with him and leave Miss Sanders to look after Dr. Crofton.

"He is a perfectly odious little man, Paul, darling, so unlike you in every way. He won't let me do a thing for him; and he is so abominably proud, he would die rather than ask me anything. I could box his ears if it were not so vulgar; I really could. I never knew I had a temper till this man came here. But, Paul, I confess I sometimes feel positively wild with him. It would be the very greatest pleasure to me to seize him by the shoulders and shake him thoroughly; that it would. I was darning the man's socks the other day, when he came into the room, and, instead of thanking me, he said he could not think of allowing me to do such a thing, and he carried the pile away. I waited till he was gone out, when I fetched them all down again and mended every one. I hate darning, as you know, but I was determined to have my own way about it. He found out I had done it, for he is the neatest and most particular and most observant man about his clothes in this world; and, to punish me, I suppose, he never spoke the whole evening. I *hate* a sulky temper; and after living with a good-tempered man like you, Paul, it is a trial to live even for six weeks with this little doctor, though I really believe his temper is owing to ill-health. He is a martyr to indigestion, and most imprudent in his diet. However, I find the only way is to have nothing on the table that he

ought not to eat ; so we are all on a strict *régime* for his sake. He does not suspect it, I need scarcely say, but imagines I, who have the digestion of an ostrich, live on milk puddings, mutton, and chickens habitually. Peter's temper is rather trying when he is overworked, but he is an angel compared to this man, though I must do him the justice to say he apologized to me after the sock episode. Now Peter would never do that ; he would be sorry if he hurt your feelings in his anger, but he is too proud to acknowledge it."

It was Sir Peter, of course, who received this letter, and as Paul had told him to read Dorothy's letters before sending them on, he did so, and was much edified by her remarks on his temper, which he was obliged to confess were perfectly just, far more so than her judgment of his friend Crofton, which struck him as unnecessarily severe.

But then Sir Peter had never lived with Dr. Crofton.

CHAPTER XII.

CHLOE FULFILLS HER PROMISE.

THE three elder Miss Danes were no doubt exemplary women. They belonged to a class which, happily or unhappily—who shall say ?—is dying out, and will probably be extinct in the next generation. They were not highly educated ; they had no modern cravings for latch-keys and careers ; they did not read naughty novels nor desire to go to naughty plays ; they had no views on social questions ; they had no restless longing to leave their home and go forth into the world in any capacity except that in which Providence had placed them ; they were not up-to-date ; they were not Agnostics ; they believed what their Bibles taught them ; they were narrow-minded, no doubt, but they were good women, and lived up to the light that was in them. They went early to bed, and were early to rise ; they read good books, and they worked ; they visited the poor and the sick ; they did not neglect their social duties. Augusta attended particularly to the house and the servants, Constance to the garden, Bertha to the parish, and it never occurred to any of them that their lives were dull and monotonous.

Chloe was made of different stuff, and although no more highly educated than her sisters, no more up-to-date than they in her views, yet she was infected by that restlessness which is

in the air. She had met face to face that modern spirit of rebellion who goes about seeking whom he may devour.

During her father's lifetime she had sometimes wondered that Augusta did not get tired of ordering the dinner and scolding the servants, of always being punctual, that Constance did not weary of her constant cheerfulness and her daily interviews with the gardener, that Bertha's goodness did not pall on her, and that she did not long to be sometimes naughty instead of being always good ; but when he died, and her principal occupation was gone, she ceased to wonder at, and began to abhor, the regularity of her sisters' lives.

For a month after Sir John's death Chloe went about very sadly and slowly ; she lost her appetite and her interest in daily life ; she neglected her violin ; she spent her days in wandering restlessly about the house and the garden, sometimes indulging in a fit of passionate grief, and then when night came she went to bed worn out with sorrow, and slept soundly. It was the sleep which saved her from a severe illness. During that month Chloe was very silent, but she was thinking of many things. Among others she was trying to solve the problem of her own future. She watched Augusta and Constance and Bertha, and she decided she should go mad if she had to live the life which seemed thoroughly to satisfy each of them.

As she made her plans for the future, the figure of Paul Dursley would obtrude itself into her schemes, but Chloe resolutely thrust it aside and would have none of it, and told herself that that chapter in her life was closed.

"I shall never marry, never. Augusta may, perhaps, and Constance and Bertha, but I shall be the old maid of the family. I don't look like an old maid, but I suppose I shall look like one in time. There is one comfort : I shall never look the least like the others. I shall never be too tall ; I shall never be freckled ; I shall never be sandy ; I shall never be punctual ; I shall never be cheerful ; I shall never be good ; and now that I have quite settled what I am not going to be, I will go and tell the others what I mean to be. Their faces will be a study."

It was one Sunday afternoon, rather more than a month after Sir John's death, that Chloe came to this conclusion, and she ran down to the drawing-room with more energy than she had dis-

played since her loss. It was just tea-time; the room was in semi-darkness, and the three Miss Danes were nodding over some pious books, the only literature they permitted themselves to indulge in on Sundays.

As Chloe tripped into the room they all three roused themselves, and Augusta rang for lights and tea.

"Were you all three asleep? It is time I woke you up; it is nearly five o'clock. Augusta, I am coming out as a violinist."

"Do you mean you are going to take to practising again? I am glad, for you have been very irregular lately."

"I mean I am going to London to be trained, and then I am going to play at concerts."

"To London, Chloe! I thought Herr Munich said he could not teach you any more," said Augusta.

"So he did. That is why I am going to London. I mean to ask one of the first violinists of the day to hear me play, and then Herr Munich says he will offer to teach me and bring me out," said Chloe.

"You are out, Chloe, dear. What do you mean?" said Constance.

"I mean bring me out at public concerts in London. I am going to take up music as a profession. If I succeed—and Herr Munich says I shall—I shall make a lot of money, but that is not my reason. I *must* do it. I can't live here now; it would kill me or drive me mad. You see, I am not like all of you. I don't care for housekeeping, and gardening, and visiting sick people, and teaching dirty children, and lecturing poor people who, I daresay, are a great deal better than I am. I can't do it. All I care for now is my violin. I shall never love anything or anybody half as much as I love my violin."

"Chloe, dear!" protested Bertha.

"I didn't mean to be unkind, Bertha. I believe I am fonder of you than of any one in this world now, but I must have something to live for. I am going to live for music."

"Chloe! How very unscriptural!" exclaimed Augusta.

"The Bible says we should strive to die daily, and we should try to do it cheerfully," said Constance, improving on the sacred text.

"I can't even live cheerfully just now, Constance. When I have accomplished that with the help of my violin, I'll try and die,

if not cheerfully, at least musically, like the swan in 'Lohengrin.' But will you make some arrangement for me to live in London, Augusta, please, or shall I make inquiries myself?"

"We must consult your guardians, Chloe, first. I can't do anything in the matter without their consent, nor can you until you are of age."

"They will agree to anything I ask them, at least Uncle Robert will, and Mr. Simpson will agree to anything Uncle Robert proposes, so I look upon it as decided, and we need not discuss it any further."

From that time Chloe took to practising for five or six hours a day. She went up to London to stay with her uncle Robert for a week or two, when it was arranged she should wait for a few months, until she was in better health, and then go up to town and study under the first master of the day. Meanwhile she was to continue to practise under Herr Munich's supervision, and to take as much outdoor exercise as possible in the intervals.

Chloe agreed to this all the more readily because she did not want to leave home until after Mr. Dursley's trial, although she would not have confessed to any one that she felt any interest in it, and she tried to persuade herself she was only interested in it for her father's sake, not at all for Paul's.

This might be true, but, nevertheless, it was clear to everybody that she was intensely relieved when the trial was over, but to no one, except Bertha, did Chloe even mention the subject. None of the sisters were in court during the trial; they were not wanted as witnesses, for there was no attempt on the side of the defence to deny the charge; the nurse gave all the evidence that was required from the house for the prosecution, and from her they heard all about the trial as soon as it was over.

"Poor Mr. Dursley! I am sorry for him. I think he has behaved splendidly, and it does seem hard he should be punished for it," said Bertha.

"You forget, Bertha, that he is being punished for habitually neglecting part of his duty," said Chloe.

"No, Chloe dear, he is not. He is being punished for his sister's mistake; he has done all he possibly could to screen her; he might have got off altogether if he had chosen, instead of which he took all the blame and all the consequences, and I must say I admire him for it," said Bertha, inwardly wondering

at her own temerity in daring to say so much to her fiery little sister.

Truth to tell, Chloe was really pleased at hearing this defence of Paul, though not for the world would she have acknowledged it. On the contrary, she broke out into a violent tirade against him, declaring that it served him quite right, and if only she had been the judge, she would have punished him far more severely, and if Bertha chose to forgive him, of course she could, but she should never do so, never.

After this Bertha was somewhat surprised that Chloe announced her intention, on the first Friday after Mr. Dursley's imprisonment, of going to the prison with her that afternoon, when Bertha went as usual to read to some of the prisoners.

"Are you going to ask to see Mr. Dursley, Chloe dear?" said Bertha as they walked up the hill to the Castle, the county gaol.

"Yes. You heard me promise to visit him, and though I only promised in fun, I mean to keep my promise; but you must ask, and you must come with me, Bertha," said Chloe.

"Perhaps he will refuse to see us," said Bertha.

"He can please himself about that," said Chloe haughtily.

Sir Peter most certainly would have refused to see them if Paul had not written to him and begged him to let him know if Chloe came, what she said and did, whether she brought her violin, whether she was sympathetic or cold, how she looked, and a great deal more; so the two girls were admitted after a brief delay.

Neither of them had seen Mr. Dursley since he had shaved off his beard and moustache; therefore, when they saw Sir Peter occupying the cell instead of Paul, they both took him for himself at first, and though it never occurred to Chloe that the brothers had changed places, she exclaimed, in a tone of evident disappointment, "Why, it is Sir Peter!"

Fortunately for Sir Peter, there was no gaoler present, or suspicions might have been aroused, but the governor had given orders that the young ladies should be allowed to see Mr. Dursley alone, as they were friends.

"It is losing my beard and the confinement and loss of fresh air that have made the difference," said Sir Peter as Chloe continued to look searchingly at him with her great black eyes.

He was indeed altered, she thought. Not only had he lost his beard and moustache, but he had lost his colour and his gaiety,

and looked pale and subdued. If this were the effect of one week's imprisonment, what would he be like at the end of six weeks? thought Chloe, and a great wave of pity swept over her.

He did not even seem particularly pleased to see them ; as a matter of fact, he felt rather bored, and to Chloe's pity succeeded a feeling of disappointment and mortification. With it came the memory of her father's death and the scene with Paul on the same night, and then, to the surprise and embarrassment of the others, Chloe turned her back to the prisoner, and sinking on to a chair, burst into a fit of tears.

"Poor child ! It was very good of you both to come and see me," said Sir Peter, wondering how Paul would behave under the circumstances and wishing these young women would not interrupt him in this awkward manner.

"We had better leave her alone for a few minutes ; she will be all right directly. I was afraid it might be too much for her, but she would keep her promise," said Bertha in an undertone to Sir Peter.

Sir Peter wished he knew what the promise was as he offered Bertha a seat and casually threw a newspaper over his MS. which lay on the table, to hide the handwriting, but he was not quick enough. Bertha had caught a glimpse of it, and as she had seen Paul's writing several times, she knew it was not his, and her suspicions began to be awakened.

Sir Peter saw this, and hastened to allay them. "I have a MS. of my brother Peter's there ; I am revising it for him during my imprisonment," he said.

"How clever of him, but I always knew he was quite as clever as Sir Peter," thought Chloe, who heard the remark.

"How wicked of him to tell such a story ; I am sure it is Sir Peter himself," thought Bertha.

"You are the only visitors I choose to see ; I won't even allow my sister to come, for I know it would upset her and make her miserable," said Sir Peter, scribbling something on a slip of paper, which he handed to Bertha, and signed to her to read it while Chloe was not looking.

Bertha looked and read :

"I see you recognize me. Keep our secret even from her if you can, but I am sure I can trust you."

Bertha flushed crimson, but nodded assent, and Sir Peter

asked if they had seen anything of Dorothy since his imprisonment, and went on to tell Bertha of the dislike she had taken to Dr. Crofton and to express a wish that she and Chloe would go and see her.

"We will, Mr. Dursley, and we will tell you all about her the next time we come, if you will let us come again," said Bertha.

"I shall be only too pleased to see you. The hours seem very long sometimes. What lovely flowers! Did you bring them for me?" he continued as Bertha held a large bunch of lilies-of-the-valley towards him.

"Yes," said Bertha, again blushing, for it was Chloe who had gathered and brought the lilies, and ordered her to give them to Mr. Dursley.

"How very kind of you!"

"I'll arrange them, Bertha," said Chloe, suddenly turning round and coming towards them. She had stopped crying now, and opening a little bag she carried, produced a vase, which she filled with water from Sir Peter's ewer, and then began to arrange the flowers.

He watched her, but, though she made a pretty picture, her restlessness and sudden changes from grave to gay, her quick, unexpected movements, irritated rather than charmed him, and it was a relief to him to turn to the quiet, sober Bertha, whose sympathetic voice and manner had just the contrary effect to Chloe. There was a repose about Bertha which soothed him, and which was wholly wanting in Chloe.

"I wish I had brought my fiddle; I was not sure if they would let me play it here, but Major Miller said I might. Would you like me to bring it next time, Mr. Dursley?" said Chloe, flitting round the cell and placing the flowers first in one place and then in another to see where they looked best, thereby fidgetting Sir Peter greatly.

Why could not the girl sit quietly down and chat, or listen to him and Bertha, like an ordinary mortal, instead of flying about like some wanton butterfly? She was certainly very pretty, and no doubt Paul would have enjoyed her vagaries, but the uncertainty of her next movement only worried Sir Peter and distracted his attention from Bertha, who was telling him about some of the other prisoners.

"What a sweet little girl you have here, Mr. Dursley! Who is

it?" asked Chloe, pouncing on a photograph of Nona which stood on the chimney-piece.

"It is Peter's eldest child," said Sir Peter.

"And are you so very fond of Sir Peter's eldest child that you carry her photograph about with you?" asked Chloe.

"I am very fond of her," said Sir Peter.

"Besides, any picture helps to give a homelike look even to a prison," said Bertha.

Chloe continued her examination of the cell, concluding it by getting on to a chair and looking out of the barred window to see what was to be seen outside.

"Only a horrid paved yard. Is that where you have to walk, Mr. Dursley?"

"Yes, but there is a kitchen - garden beyond, which the prisoners cultivate. That I am allowed to go into also."

"And do you do any gardening? Bertha, let me come and sit there and have a little talk to Mr. Dursley before we go; you have been talking to him ever since we came in," said Chloe, seating herself on the chair Bertha had been occupying, with an air of importance.

"I only hope she'll do the talking, or I am sure she'll discover who I am. I wonder what terms Paul is on with her; I understood it was a quarrel, but this does not seem like it," thought Sir Peter.

"Well, you see I have kept my promise. You didn't expect me to do so, did you?" began Chloe.

"What the deuce would Paul say to this, I wonder?" thought Sir Peter.

"Yes, I hoped you would," he answered most untruly.

"Then you had no business to expect anything of the kind"——

"I said hoped, not expected," he interrupted.

"It does not matter. You ought not to have hoped, because you know you did not deserve it at all. Now I shall come every week, because I said I would, but I want you to clearly understand, it is a keen sense of duty and the wish to keep my promise, and nothing else at all, that brings me. Do you see?"

"I understand," said Sir Peter.

"That is all right. I thought it better to make that clear, as now we shan't misunderstand each other, and of course I shall always bring one of my sisters with me; it is Augusta's turn next week, isn't it, Bertha?"

"Yes, and Constance's the week after," said Bertha regretfully.

"Can't you two manage always to come? You know I see no one else, and Dorothy might be jealous if she heard I admitted four Miss Danes, and refused her," said Sir Peter, who not only thought his chances of discovery would be increased twofold by the admittance of Augusta and Constance, but who also had taken a fancy to Bertha and wished to see her again. He did not know why he experienced this wish, for she was not an attractive girl; she was not clever nor amusing; she was neither graceful in movement nor charming in manner; she was ladylike, and she was amiable, and she had a quiet way with her, at once soothing and sympathetic, which exercised a charm over the great doctor. She looked at Chloe to answer, thinking Sir Peter's reason for wishing her to come again was solely and simply because she had recognized him, and had he told her he had any other motive, she would not have believed him.

"Oh yes, we can manage it, if you would rather have Bertha; you can have Constance and Bertha if you like instead of me," said Chloe, with just a touch of jealousy, only, as she reflected, it really was too ridiculous for her to be jealous of dear, good, plain, unattractive Bertha.

"No, we must not forget your promise," said Sir Peter, who, much as Chloe fidgetted him, preferred her to Augusta or Constance, and he felt bound to show it for Paul's sake.

At this juncture the gaoler unlocked the door and announced that the half-hour was over, and Sir Peter took leave of his visitors. He gave Bertha's hand a squeeze, which she interpreted as a request to keep his secret, and thought it was a very nice way of preferring his petition.

"Bertha, what made you blush so when you said good-bye to Mr. Dursley?" said Chloe when they were walking away from the Castle.

"I didn't know I did," said Bertha, blushing again.

"You are blushing now. I think I shall take a stick and beat myself when we get home."

"Chloe dear, why?"

"Because I was such an idiot as to cry when we arrived there. You know it was not because he looked so altered and so ill, nor yet because it sounded so hard for him when the gaoler locked the door on us, nor yet because it seemed so dreadful to be shut

up in that dull, ugly room with the barred windows ; he deserves all that : it was because it all reminded me so of Dad when I remembered why he was there ; that was why I cried. You quite understand, don't you, Bertha ? ”

“ Yes, dear, it was very natural. ”

“ And you feel certain he understood that too ? ”

“ No doubt he did, dear. ”

“ I am sure I hope so, but men are so abominably conceited. Perhaps, if there is any doubt about it, we had better not go next week. ”

“ Just as you like, dear, ” said Bertha, but she felt disappointed.

“ I shall see how I feel. I believe he talked to you to try and make me jealous. Now I come to think of it, he scarcely spoke to me, and when he did he avoided looking at me, as he always does. Now it won't do for me to appear jealous ; that is just what he evidently wants me to feel, so I think perhaps we had better go next Friday. I shall take my violin, and try and be a little more lively than I was to-day, ” said Chloe.

“ What shall you do about Augusta and Constance ? ”

“ Tell them, if they want to go, they must call on Miss Dursley first ; they won't do that, so you and I will ride over on Monday and see her and tell her all about Paul, Mr. Dursley I mean. We'll make her give us a private message for him, and then they can't come. They won't mind ; they prefer the parish to the prison. ”

And Bertha knew by experience that Chloe would have her own way on this, as on most occasions, and was content to leave her to arrange matters.

CHAPTER XIII.

A RISKY GAME.

DRUMMOND was certainly a very well-trained servant, and acted his part in the little drama the twin brothers were enacting to admiration. He opened the door when Mr. Dursley arrived in his brother's carriage and pair on the evening of the trial. Mr. Dursley ran up the steps two at a time, just as the great doctor always did, and gave what he flattered himself was a very correct imitation of his knock, but omitted to ring the bell.

“ I didn't hear the bell, Sir Peter, ” said Drummond as he opened the door.

“ Any messages ? ” said Paul, noting the hint.

"None of any importance, Sir Peter ; I have put the letters on your writing-table, as usual. But it is just half-past seven ; you won't have more than time to dress for dinner."

"I'll just look at them first," said Paul, wondering why Sir Peter wanted to dress for dinner every evening, even when he was alone ; for Mrs. Meadows, his mother-in-law, had gone abroad that day to be out of the way, by her son-in-law's advice.

Drummond followed his master into the consulting-room, ostensibly to look after the fire, in reality because he felt sure he would be wanted.

About a dozen letters lay on the table, which Paul proceeded to open. Five or six were from patients requesting appointments ; one or two were bills ; three were invitations to dinner ; and one was a request to speak at a political meeting.

This was the most awkward of all, for Sir Peter was a Liberal, and Paul a red-hot Tory. Sir Peter was considered a very good speaker, Paul had never exerted himself to try what his oratorical powers might be, but he had a conviction that if he chose he could acquit himself as well as his brother. He had often heard Sir Peter speak, and knew his style ; and he conceived it would be rare fun for him, with his Conservative opinions, to speak on the opposite side. So he decided to accept that invitation. He scribbled "Yes" on the card and the hours he would see the patients on the back of their notes, just as he knew his brother always did ; but for the invitations to dinner he must consult Drummond.

"Am I engaged on the 8th, Drummond ? Lady Parmeter has asked me to dinner."

"No, sir. You had to refuse her ladyship's invitation last time, if you remember, sir, so it is lucky you can go."

Paul inwardly groaned, for Lady Parmeter was a stranger to him, and wrote "Accept" on the card.

"How about the 12th ? Mrs. Halkett wants me to dine with her *en famille*."

"Another engagement, sir. That's the third time she has asked you within a month. She'll be here in a day or two to see you *professionally*," said Drummond with fine sarcasm.

"I never dine there, do I ?"

"Never, Sir Peter," said Drummond in a tone that implied he would be very much shocked if his master did so commit himself.

Mr. Dursley's curiosity was aroused ; he would rather have liked to accept this invitation. He glanced at it again as he wrote "Decline" on the back.

"She is a widow, isn't she, Drummond ? I almost forget," he remarked.

The fact that she did not use the plural number in her invitation suggested this to him.

"Yes, Sir Peter."

And Drummond poked the fire with unnecessary vigour.

"General Malcolmson asks me to dine with him at the club next Saturday—Malcolmson ; I don't remember the name."

"He's an old schoolfellow, sir, just home from India. You dined with him about two months ago, and said he played the best rubber of any gentleman at the club. You are not engaged for Saturday."

"I wish I were," thought Paul, who was no whist-player, but evidently Drummond intended him to accept this invitation, so he wrote "Accept" on it, handed them all to Drummond to give to the young man Sir Peter employed to answer his letters, and then went upstairs to dress for dinner.

"Luxurious fellow old Peter is. Here am I enjoying all his comforts while he is in 'gaol," thought Mr. Dursley as he dressed for dinner in Sir Peter's large, luxurious bedroom, lighted by electricity and furnished in the latest modern style.

At dinner Drummond was very unwilling to allow him anything to drink but Burgundy and hock, a particular brand of which wines Sir Peter invariably drank, and was with difficulty persuaded to produce some whisky, and regretted there was no beer in the house when Paul, who infinitely preferred it to wine, suggested that when he dined alone he might be allowed some. This Drummond absolutely vetoed ; it would be noticed in the servants' hall if he were to order beer for the dining-room, so Paul regretfully gave way, and was thankful Peter was not a teetotaler as well as a non-smoker.

"I'll tell you what, Drummond : I am going to take to smoking. You can mention that fact downstairs if you think it will interest them," said Paul, who knew he could not abstain from tobacco for six weeks ; and Drummond took care to make this new freak of his master's the chief topic of conversation that evening at supper.

When Drummond had retired Paul lighted a cigar, and throw-

ing himself into an armchair, sat by the dining-room fire, thinking over the odd position in which he found himself. One of the minor difficulties of it was the difference in the handwriting of the brothers. Fortunately Sir Peter wrote but few private letters and employed a secretary for most of his professional correspondence ; but the prescriptions were a difficulty, and so were letters to Dorothy. Mr. Dursley had solved the latter problem for the present by telegraphing to his sister on reaching London, saying he had left Paul fairly comfortable, in very good spirits, and that he was too busy to write.

Suddenly his cigar inspired a solution of the prescription problem. He decided to write his prescriptions in printed letters ; he could very well give as an excuse that he did so because of the unfortunate mistake made in Sir John Dane's case.

On the whole he looked forward to the next few weeks as a grand joke, and he told himself he meant to try and get some fun out of it.

"It won't do for you, Paul Dursley, to look on the dark side of things ; you have made a hash of your career, and now you must just take the consequences, and for the present be thankful you are in Peter's shoes literally as well as figuratively, and not in Eastwich gaol. You have lost Chloe, and you have lost your practice, and you have not got so very much to live for, but you are no worse off than most people. Life is an abominably sad business, taking it all round ; the best way is to get as much pleasure as you can out of it. It is rather like driving a donkey, the pace is slow, but if you only have patience you will get to the end of your journey in time.

"Thank the stars, I shan't have much time for thinking of myself and Chloe. I shall find my time pretty well occupied in imagining I am Peter and doing his work. And, after all, Chloe may forgive me when she knows the whole truth, as perhaps she may some day. It looks very careless of me to allow Dorothy to dispense for me, but, as a matter of fact, it was not, because I knew she was quite competent. It is confounded hard lines on me to lose Chloe just as I thought I had won her ; I don't care a rap for the rest. I hate a general practitioner's life ; if I lived in London like old Peter, I might work as hard as he does.

"Well, I am Peter *pro tem.*, so I may as well do my best, for, by Jingo, if either he or I should be discovered, it will be a far

worse kettle of fish for us both than Sir John's death. I must strain every nerve in my body to prevent that. It is that dinner at the club with old Malcolmson that bothers me ; and the fear lest I should ever be called in to a consultation by a man who knows Peter well. However, I will wait till that happens.

"Meanwhile I mean to get some fun out of it. By Jove, what a joke it would be if I could only get up a flirtation with some fast girl—a widow would be the best—so that when Peter comes back he finds himself in rather a difficulty ! Then there is the political meeting. Let me see what the subject is. I am to speak on 'Emancipation of women.' Egad, I can get some fun out of that ; I'll let them have it. I agree with Peter on that subject *in toto*. Well, Paul Dursley, it is a deucedly dangerous game you are going to play, my boy. Thank goodness, I am not afraid of my professional knowledge being at fault, or I dare not have run the risk. I believe I do know as much about that as Peter, only I have had less experience in his special line. I think I'll turn in ; it has been a long, tiring day. I would give a great deal to know if Chloe will go and visit Peter in prison."

The thought of Chloe delayed his going to bed for another hour, when Drummond appeared with the information that it was eleven o'clock, delivered in a tone of reproach.

The next morning Sir Peter's double entered with some trepidation on his duties ; but before the second patient was shown in he had lost his nervousness, and entered into the spirit of his adventurous career. As it happened, all the patients that morning were fresh cases ; three or four had very little wrong with them ; but there was one poor young fellow, with a brilliant career before him, full of hope, and utterly unconscious of the dangerous state he was in, to whom Paul had to break part of the sad truth as gently as he could.

"Poor wretch ! No wonder Peter takes life seriously ! I should if I had many such cases as that to deal with," thought Paul as he went to luncheon.

Sir Peter generally saw patients again in the afternoon ; at least, he rarely left the house before four, when he frequently had a consultation. On this occasion there were only a few visits to be paid after four, which Paul got through as well as he expected. He had to tone down his own usual gay manner to Sir Peter's graver air, for three of these cases were people

the great doctor had visited before. The distances between the houses were great, and he did not get back till just in time for dinner ; but so far he was very well satisfied with the way he had acquitted himself.

The dinner with General Malcolmson at the club, which was to come off the next day (Saturday), was a nightmare to him. He hated whist, and was not a good player, and he had serious thoughts of pleading a professional call, but he reflected this would only be to postpone the evil day, so he screwed up his courage, studied Cavendish, and when the time came went.

The dinner itself passed off very successfully. General Malcolmson was a great talker, and regaled his guest with anecdotes of India ; and as Paul had also been at Rugby with him, he was as competent as Peter to take part in reminiscences of their school-days.

"What a lazy young scamp that brother of yours was, Dursley, wasn't he ? Clever fellow enough, but deucedly indolent ; one of the best-tempered fellows I ever met, too. How is he getting on ?"

"I am sorry to say he is in a terrible scrape. Didn't you see it in the papers ?" said Paul, proceeding to tell the story of Sir John's death.

"Dear me ! I wonder I missed it. Do you mean to say he is actually in gaol now ?"

"Yes, he has had nearly a week of it."

"Poor old Paul ! I say, Dursley, shall I run down one day and see him ? Do you think he would care to see me ?"

"I believe he does not care to see any one, not even my sister, so I don't think it would be any good proposing it. It is awfully good of you to suggest it, Malcolmson. I know Paul will appreciate your kindness greatly. I'll tell him when I write."

To Paul's relief, General Malcolmson sat some time over his wine, and regretted that his guest did not smoke, but he regretted it less than Paul, who dared not venture on a pipe in public ; and then at last the general suggested whist, and they went upstairs to the card-room.

"Hullo, Dursley ! I thought you were never coming. Lowndes and I have been waiting for the last hour for you two," exclaimed a man Paul did not even know by sight as they entered the card-room.

They cut for partners, and the gentleman named Lowndes fell to Paul's share, and he thanked the stars that he knew his

partner's name. Paul acquitted himself only fairly well, and was told by his partner he was not in his usual form that evening.

"Shall we give up after this rubber? Dursley is thinking of his brother," suggested General Malcolmson.

"True; I had forgotten that. Fearful hard lines on him, Dursley! No wonder you did not notice my last call for trumps! We'll stop, then," said Mr. Lowndes, to the great relief of his partner.

When Paul had left the card-room his play was the topic of conversation for some time. Mr. Lowndes evidently "smelt a rat," and by-and-by, when he and the general found themselves alone, he spoke more openly.

"I can't make it out at all. I never saw Dursley play as he did to-night in my life before. He did not even shuffle the cards as he generally does. In fact, if he had a double in the world, I should have said it was he, and not Dursley."

"Well, his twin-brother used to be the living image of him at school; but he is in gaol, so it was not he."

"No; besides, I have seen him dining here with Dursley; they are remarkably alike, but the brother has a beard and moustache, and more colour; and he takes life much less *au grand sérieux* than Dursley. I own I can't make it out; Dursley is a very abstemious man, too, so it was not that. I suppose he was so preoccupied thinking of his brother, he hardly knew what he was doing; but it is queer."

When General Malcolmson was alone he thought over Lowndes's remarks. He remembered the tricks the twins had played at school, how they delighted in mystifying boys and masters as to their identity, and the idea occurred to him, Was it possible they had managed to change places? Would a man in Sir Peter's position be such a fool as to run such a risk? Paul might, for he was always a harum-scarum, but the general could not bring himself to believe Sir Peter would.

"I'll go and see Dursley to-morrow and tell him he mystified old Lowndes," he said to himself as he made his way home. "If they are up to anything of that kind they had better avoid the club, or at least whist; there is no greater revealer of character than whist."

On Sunday morning, just as Paul was wondering whether he was bound to go to church—for he rarely went, whereas Sir Peter seldom missed the morning service—General Malcolmson was announced.

"You are just in time; I was now going to church," said Paul,

hoping the fact that he had just been smoking would escape his visitor's notice, which it did not. On the contrary, it served to strengthen the suspicion Mr. Lowndes had awakened.

"We were a little anxious about you last night at the club. Lowndes said after you were gone he never knew you play as you did. He thought you must have a double in town, who had taken your place," said General Malcolmson, watching the effect of his words.

Paul never turned a hair. He saw Malcolmson suspected the truth, but it only put him on his mettle.

"Yes, I did play vilely ; but the truth is, all my thoughts were with Paul. This affair of his has been no end of a worry to me, on my own account as well as on his, for it was my prescription they blundered over. Look here, Malcolmson, are you engaged next Saturday ?"

"No, I don't think I am."

"Well, will you dine with me here? I'll ask Lowndes and any one you like to suggest for the fourth, and I'll see if I can't redeem my character," said Paul, stroking his bare chin exactly as Sir Peter was in the habit of doing.

"It is Peter after all. He would never dare ask us to dinner and run the risk of whist a second time," thought Malcolmson as he accepted the invitation, and suggested Major Forbes, who had played with them the previous evening, as the fourth.

"Do you want to go to church this morning, Dursley ?" he asked.

"Yes. I never like to miss if I can help it. I always went in my wife's lifetime ; now I take my little girl, but my children are all down in the country just now. Their grandmother had to go to the Riviera for the spring, so I sent the little ones down to Dorothy."

"All right. I'll be off. You never smoke, do you ?"

"Well, I tried a cigar this morning. Paul has been urging me to take to it, as I have been suffering from insomnia, but if I take to it it must be *sub rosa* ; lady patients don't like it."

This removed any lingering suspicion in the general's mind, and he went away satisfied that Paul was Peter, and that his bad play the previous night was due to anxiety on Paul's account.

When he was gone, Paul did not go to church ; he went back to the consulting-room and reviewed the situation.

"Egad ! That was a narrow escape, and no mistake ; Malcolmson suspected me. I don't know that Lowndes did not also, but

Malcolmson certainly did when he came in. It is all right now again, but, by Jupiter, it was a near shave ! I must avoid the club, that is clear. Fortunately Peter does not go for a week sometimes. That won't matter, but, what is more difficult to arrange, Peter must dine here next Saturday. I must go down there one day next week, and Peter must come back, and Paul remain in gaol. There is no doubt about that ; we must remove even a shadow of suspicion from those fellows. This is about the most exciting game I ever played in my life, but, heaven and earth ! it won't do to lose. I'll write to old Peter and give him as broad a hint as I dare. I don't suppose the governor will read my letter, but I had better be cautious."

Thus musing, Mr. Dursley sat down and wrote the following letter to Sir Peter :

"MY DEAR PAUL,—Will you ask leave for me to come and see you next Thursday ? I can manage to get away unless anything unforeseen occurs, and I want particularly to see you. There is a practice here I think you might do worse than buy. I dined at the club last night, but I was not at all in good form, and astonished Lowndes and Malcolmson by my bad play. The latter has just been to inquire for me. I have asked them and Forbes to dine here next Saturday, when I trust Peter will be himself again and redeem his character. I am going to speak next week on the 'Emancipation of women.' Let me hear how you are.—Your affectionate brother, P. DURSLEY."

"There, I think Peter will guess the gravity of the situation, and also understand he must come and save it. I fixed Thursday in order to be there on Friday, in case Chloe should see fit to visit me ; but really Saturday would do even better, for if by any chance we could not exchange, I could wire to these fellows that I was detained in the country with an important case. I must be more cautious in future. Monday week is his hospital day, too ; I dare not risk that. I would rather be in gaol than feel in such a blue fright as I did this morning. The game is not worth the candles, Peter, my boy ; so when once you are out of Eastwich gaol you don't get in again, if I can help it. We are running too great a risk."

They certainly were, but it was rather late in the day to think of it.

(To be continued.)

The Mythology of Gems.

By MRS. E. M. DAVY.

IT was the week preceding Christmas, and the jewellers' windows were ablaze with jewels. Purchasers seemed plentiful : men were buying jewels to give as presents to women, women buying them to give to men.

What consideration it would have taken in days of old to find the gem best suited to convey the sentiments of the donor—not only the sentiments, but one capable of imparting to the recipient some specially occult or talismanic charm !

And this buying of jewels set me thinking—thinking of something beyond and above the intrinsic value of the stone. Then, searching among the writings and traditions of the past, I gathered together what I found there into this :

How the origin of precious stones, their formation, their components, seem to have puzzled the philosophers of old ! None would avow his ignorance, but each solved the question arbitrarily by setting forth his own scientific sophisms, his fanciful conjectures, as infallible truths.

Pliny says that in gems we have all the majesty of Nature gathered in a small compass, and that in no other of her works has she produced anything so admirable.

All ancient writers maintain strict silence regarding the birth-place of gems. This is accounted for by the extreme jealousy with which the nations who traded in them endeavoured to conceal the sources whence they drew their rich merchandise. When the truth could not be wholly concealed, it was transfigured by fables, and these fables were always of a nature to deter adventurers from entering into competition, and also perhaps to add supernatural value to the gems. For instance, the finest Oriental emeralds were reported to lie in Syrian gold mines, guarded by ferocious griffins.

This and similar fictions were sanctioned by the testimony of Pliny, Pomponias, Mela, Strabo, Pausanias, and other serious writers.

Strabo asserted that certain death awaited the stranger who navigated towards the island of Sardinia or the Pillars of Hercules (south-west of Spain). This report was circulated by the Carthaginians, who were extremely jealous of any approach to an island whence they obtained the sardonyx. According to Heeren, the Etruscans and Carthaginians carried on a large trade in diamonds and other precious stones which they obtained from the interior of Africa. It is a fact that the Arabs to this day entertain the same superstitious fears with regard to mines that the ancients did, and believe them to be the refuge of snakes, wolves, and other beasts of prey and the abode of demons, who resent intrusion.

It is almost impossible to identify the gems mentioned by the ancients. In the Bible all the precious stones known to us are supposed to be named. The vestments of the high-priest glittered with jewels; and it has been conjectured that the two onyx stones that were placed on the shoulders of the ephod were in reality diamonds. Whether the stone called *shamir* is the diamond remains a question yet unsolved.

We labour under the same uncertainty with regard to other gems. The ancients gave the name of *smaragdus*, which we take to have been the emerald, to stones of a very different kind. The description given by Pliny of the emerald only suits the peridot, a yellowish-green stone found in Cyprus, which has also been denominated the bastard emerald. The sapphire of the ancients is thought by mineralogists to be nothing more than our lapis-lazuli.

In the East, wealth was estimated by the value of the jewels a man had more than by the value of any other kind of property. Very beautiful are many of the metaphors in which the Oriental poets have used them.

The Talmud says that Noah had no other light in the ark than that given forth by precious stones; also that Abraham, jealous of his numerous wives, kept them shut up in an iron city, of which the walls were so high that the sun, moon, and stars were invisible to its inhabitants. To supply light Abraham gave the women a great bowl full of jewels, sufficient to illuminate the whole city.

There is an Oriental tradition to the effect that Abraham wore a precious stone round his neck which preserved him from

disease, and which cured sickness when looked upon. At the death of the Patriarch, God placed this stone in the sun ; hence the Hebrew proverb, " When the sun rises the disease will abate."

With what perfect gravity and earnestness many learned authors discussed the marvellous properties attributed to gems ! Among those who philosophized most profoundly on this subject was Anselm Boece de Boot, physician to the Emperors Rodolph II. and Maximilian II. He wrote in 1664.

This *savant* does not deny the supernatural effects attributed to gems, but explains them as not in the nature of the stone itself, but as being imparted to it by supernatural influences. He says :

" The supernatural and acting cause is God, the good angel and the evil one, the good by the *will* of God, the evil by the *permission* of God. Good angels, by a special grace of God and to secure the preservation of things, are enabled to enter precious stones."

But the doctor goes on to say that as we can assert nothing positively touching the presence of angels in precious stones, so neither should we believe too implicitly nor ascribe too much to them. And he continues :

" For my own part, I do rather incline to the opinion that the evil spirit, under the semblance of an angel of light, taketh up its abode in precious stones and enacts prodigies in order that, instead of having recourse to God, we may rest our faith on the said stones and consult them rather than God when we would compass some object. Thus perchance are we deceived in the turquoise by the spirit of evil."

The above extract may suffice to show that the learned man was not at all in doubt as to the existence of spirits in gems, only as to whether such spirits were angels or demons.

Further on he tells us that " from their purity, beauty, and brilliancy, it is most probable gems were selected as receptacles for good spirits, even as filthy, stinking, and frightful places were usually the abodes chosen for evil and unclean spirits."

The ancient pharmacopœia counted among its most sovereign remedies a very costly compound called the " Five Precious Fragments," consisting of powdered rubies, topazes, emeralds, sapphires, and hyacinths. As the patients were scarcely likely to analyze the beverage, it is more than probable they frequently,

swallowed—as indeed one writer suggests—false gems, while the physician or chemist wisely pocketed the real stones, which thus escaped a barbarous and useless destruction.

All gems were supposed to express antipathy to poisons. Holinshed tells us that King John, observing a moisture on the jewels he wore, thought it an indication that some pears he was about to eat contained poison.

The day after the reconciliation between Louis XI. and his brother, the Duc de Guienne, the King sent the latter, as a token of fast friendship, a beautiful golden cup studded with precious stones, believed to be endowed with the power to preserve from poison whoever used it.

Every precious stone has its special virtue, though some properties might be said to belong to all. The more precious the stone, the more powerful were its virtues.

The Diamond.—Diamond was the name of a beautiful youth of the island of Crete, one of the attendants of the infant Jupiter in his cradle. Diamond, not to be subject to “the ills that flesh is heir to,” was transformed into the hardest and most brilliant substance in nature.

In Arabic and Persian works on natural history, Aristotle is generally quoted as the chief authority for the story of the inaccessible valley of diamonds, where it was the custom to throw down pieces of flesh as the only means of procuring the gems. Vultures picked up these with the precious stones attached to them, and dropped them in their flight on various parts of the earth. Marco Polo, who travelled in India in the thirteenth century, gave much the same account of the method of procuring diamonds. One of the adventures of Sindbad the Sailor in the “Arabian Nights” is almost identical, and Epiphanius in the fourth century writes to much the same effect.

The diamond was called *adamas*, which means indomitable. It was never pounded and taken internally like other stones, because it was considered indigestible.

The diamond had the virtue of bestowing victory and fortitude. It calmed anger and strengthened wedded love; hence it was called the stone of reconciliation. The learned De Boot takes occasion to discourse at some length as to whether the power of discrimination between right and wrong, legal and illegal love, is

a natural quality of the stone or belongs to a spirit residing in it. For the very extraordinary arguments he uses the reader is referred to his treatise (B. II., c. IV., p. 154).

That diamonds preserved their owners from the plague was considered fully proved by the fact that the plague at first only attacked the poorer classes, and that the rich, who wore diamonds in profusion, usually escaped.

Though the diamond was not supposed to be fusible by fire, the splendour of its lustre and its properties were thought to be affected by heat, for which reason Wolfgangus Gabelschoverus advises all who wear these gems to take them off at night and place them in cold water or on a marble slab.

Among the ancients the diamond was a symbol of severe and inexorable justice and of the impassibility of fate. Hence the judges of Hades were described as having hearts of adamant. A Jewish legend relates of the gem, supposed to have been a diamond, worn on the ephod of Aaron, that when a man really guilty was charged with a crime the jewel became dark and dim; if the accused were innocent, it sparkled with increased lustre. But all these wonderful virtues are eclipsed and thrown into the shade by one most marvellous and unique—for it was attributed to no other gem—the faculty of multiplying its species!

Boetius de Boot, quoting from another learned man, relates that a lady of good family had two hereditary diamonds which produced several others and thus left a posterity. The comments of the narrator are no less curious than the statement itself; but he does not inform us whether these descendants were born small and grew in size from infancy to maturity.

The Ruby, called by the Greeks *anthrax* (live coal).—The Oriental ruby, or carbuncle of the ancients, either worn as an ornament or reduced to powder and taken internally, was an antidote to poison and a preservative against the plague. It banished sadness, repressed sensuality, put to flight evil thoughts, dispelled fearful dreams, diverted the mind, and guarded against illness generally. If misfortune threatened the wearer it gave warning by a change of colour, which darkened greatly, but when the evil or peril was no longer to be feared it resumed its usual hue.

This stone had its evil effects also. It shortened the sleep of the wearer, agitated and disturbed the circulation of the blood,

inclining him to anger. Pliny tells that "there are male and female carbuncles, the males being more acrid and vigorous, the females more languishing."

The Sapphire.—This stone, to look at, was considered excellent for the eyesight. Powder of sapphires placed on the eyes drew out dust or insects, and cured inflammation. So great was the power of the sapphire on venomous creatures that if one were over the mouth of a phial containing a spider, the insect died instantly. Worn on the heart, it cured fever, and bestowed health and energy. Its power to inspire pure and chaste thoughts caused it to be recommended to be worn by ecclesiastics. The ancients held it in the highest honour. At the sacrifices to Phœbus, his worshippers, to propitiate him, offered him a sapphire. Epiphanius states that the vision which appeared to Moses on the mount was in a sapphire, and that the first tables of the law given by God were written on this stone.

St. Jerome, in his explanation of the nineteenth chapter of Isaiah, asserts that the sapphire conciliates to the wearer the favour of princes, calms the fury of his enemies, dispels enchantments, delivers from prison, and softens the ire of God.

Lapidaries designated the deep stone the male, the pale blue the female.

The Emerald.—The first emeralds known came from the mountains of Africa, between Ethiopia and Egypt. Pliny mentions Scythia as the country whence in his days the best were brought. He asserts that the emerald gives forth an exceedingly brilliant light, and tells a story about the tomb of a king called Hermius in the island of Cyprus. On the tomb was a marble lion with emerald eyes; and such was the extraordinary brilliance of the emeralds, and so far out to sea did it extend, that the frightened fish fled from those shores. The fishermen having ascertained the cause, removed the emeralds, and substituted less costly eyes.

The emerald was held sacred among the Israelites and also among the American Indians, the stone being set in the seals which the pontiffs of both nations wore on their arms, and in a ring on the first finger of the right hand was an emerald. Nero used an emerald to watch the contests of gladiators.

The gem, worn as an amulet about the neck or set in a ring, put to flight evil spirits, and was a preserver of chastity. *Per contra* it betrayed inconstancy by crumbling into fragments when

unable to prevent evil. It taught knowledge of secrets and of future events, bestowed eloquence, and increased wealth.

Taken as a powder, the emerald was a cure for venomous bites, for fevers, and many diseases. Worn round the neck of a child, it guarded from epilepsy. If powerless to prevent or cure evil it shivered into atoms. It was a restorer of sight and memory. De Boot gives the method employed for extracting from emeralds their colouring matter, which was taken internally.

The Topaz.—To this stone, the chrysolite of the ancients, was attributed much the same quality as to the ruby: of giving light in the dark. Worn on the left hand, it preserved from sensuality. It calmed anger and frenzy; it expelled night terrors, banished melancholy, strengthened the intellect, cured cowardice, brightened wit. Powdered and taken in wine, it cured asthma, want of sleep, and other maladies.

The Opal.—Called by the ancients *pederos*, from *puer*, a child, because, like a fair and innocent child, it was worthy of all love. The opal was also named *ceraunium* (Latin) and *keraunios* (Greek), from a notion that it was a thunder-stone. This gem was not regarded by the ancients as a bringer of misfortune. As it united in itself the colours of every other precious stone, it was supposed to possess all their qualities, both moral and healing. It was deemed especially good for the eyesight, keeping it clear and strong, hence the name "opal," or "eye-stone." The French consider it unlucky, that it has "the evil eye;" but how it first came to be so regarded in modern times, I regret to say, I have failed to discover. When first taken out of the earth the opal is very soft, but it hardens and diminishes in bulk by exposure to the air. This may in some manner account for the legend that opals have been known to contract until they almost entirely disappear for a time, and then expand to their original size.

Many moderns tell of opals coming into their possession and apparently bringing misfortunes with them. It is not considered lucky to give an opal. Some say it is like helping you to salt, which means helping you to sorrow. A woman I knew vowed she met with nothing but disasters after an opal ring was given to her. She tried to lose it by dropping it in the street; once she flung it in the fire, but in vain: it was invariably returned to her.

The great Roman, Nonius, suffered proscription rather than cede his opal to Augustus.

Black opals come from Egypt. They have the glow of the ruby seen through a vapour, like a coal ignited at one end.

The Turquoise.—This gem is said to protect its owner by drawing on itself the evil that threatens; but this property belongs only to the turquoise that has been given, not to one that has been purchased.

Boetius tells a story of a turquoise that, after being thirty years in the possession of a Spaniard, was offered for sale with the rest of the owner's property. Every one was amazed to find that it had entirely lost its colour, and no offer was made for it. Subsequently it was purchased by the father of Boetius for a trifling sum. On his return home, however, ashamed to wear so mean-looking a gem, he gave it to his son, saying, "Son, as the virtues of the turquoise are said to exist only when the stone has been given, I will try its efficacy by bestowing it upon thee."

Little appreciating the gift, the recipient had his arms engraved on it as though it had been only a common agate. He had scarcely worn it a month, however, before it resumed its pristine beauty, and daily seemed to increase in splendour.

The sympathetic property of the turquoise, manifested by a change of colour, is alluded to by several old English poets. Donne writes :

"As a compassionate turquoise that doth tell,
By looking pale, the wearer is not well."

Three centuries ago it was esteemed the most valuable of all opaque stones, and no gentleman was without a turquoise ring, but the gem was not patronized by ladies.

The Pearl.—The presence of the pearl in the oyster was an unfailing subject of speculation among the wiseacres of old. This appears to have been one of the most popular myths: At certain seasons the oyster opened its shell to receive the dew, which in course of time became a pearl. The pearl was more or less beautiful according to the size and purity of the dew-drop the oyster received in its bosom. Linnæus described it as a *hurt* received by the oyster.

The pearl trade is of the remotest antiquity. The princes of the East had pearls on every part of their dress. The victories of Pompey seem first to have excited a taste for pearls in Rome.

Pliny gives an elaborate account of a portrait of Pompey wrought in pearls, which account he interlards with remarks of cutting satire. The women of that day, not content with adorning their sandal-ties with pearls, covered their shoes with them. "They must even walk on pearls!" exclaims Pliny.

The story of Cleopatra's pearl has been told for nineteen centuries.

Cæsar is said to have undertaken the conquest of Britain from exaggerated accounts of the pearls of its coasts, or rather of its rivers.

The ancients dedicated the pearl to Venus.

It had many medicinal virtues when taken, but no influence on passions or events when worn.

The oneirocritics—interpreters of dreams—drew their interpretations from pearls.

A string of pearls signifies a torrent of tears.

The Amethyst.—Aristotle gives the weight of his authority to the following myth concerning this gem :

A beautiful nymph beloved by Bacchus invoked the aid of Diana, who answered the appeal by changing her votary into a precious gem. The baffled god, in remembrance of his love, gave to the stone the colour of the purple wine, of which he had taught mortals the taste, and the faculty of preserving the wearer from its intoxicating effects.

The Oriental amethyst is one of the rarest of precious stones. It is a stone set in the rings of bishops. The Western amethyst was used by the ancients not only for personal adornment, but they made drinking cups of it, which they highly prized.

Coral.—Coral was formerly in great repute. There are many high authorities in favour of its various virtues. It was invaluable as a talisman against "enchantments, witchcraft, venom, epilepsy, assaults of Satan, thunder, tempest, and other perils." On account of these properties, it was consecrated to Jupiter and to Phœbus. Hung round the neck, it stopped hæmorrhage.

Pierre de Rosnel tells us that coral worn by a healthy man will be of a handsomer, more lively red than if worn by a woman. It becomes pale and livid if worn by a person ill or near death. Coral and bells used to be suspended round the necks of infants to repel witchcraft and scare away evil spirits.

Amber.—Myths about amber abound. Nicias the historian

asserts that the heat of the sun is so intense in some regions that it causes the earth to perspire, and the drops coagulating, form the substance called amber, and these drops were carried by the sea into Germany.

The Gauls accounted for amber as being the divine drops that fell from the eyes of Apollo. Eastern poets say that it is a gum from the tears of certain consecrated sea-birds. An abbé asserted that amber was honey melted by the sun, dropped into the sea from the mountains of Ajan and congealed by water.

The Romans set an immense value on amber. Pliny complained that a higher price was given for exceedingly diminutive human effigies of amber than for strong and robust living men. It was the fashion for Roman ladies to carry in the palms of their hands balls of amber for its delicate perfume. Amber has, to a lesser extent, the same properties as coral.

The Aquamarine, or Beryl.—This stone protected from snares of enemies. It was efficacious in liver complaints, hysteria and jaundice, convulsions, diseases of the mouth, throat, or face. When powdered it cured weak eyes. It was held by the magi as a sovereign remedy against idleness, a sharpener of the wits, and a reconciler of married people. The aquamarine rendered the wearer successful in navigation, and preserved from danger, however rough the voyage.

The Onyx.—The name is from the Greek, signifying *nail*. The stone has not such a good character as most other gems. If worn on the neck it excited melancholy, vain terrors, and other mental perturbations, all of which were counteracted or cured by the presence of the sardonyx or cornelian. Cardau asserts that the cornelian caused its owner to win lawsuits and to become rich.

The ordinary Agate has the property of preserving from the bite of venomous animals, particularly that of the scorpion. The Persians believed that its *scent* turned away tempests and arrested the impetuosity of torrents.

Each month was supposed to be under the influence of a precious stone. It is only necessary to look in the following list for the month in which one was born to find one's own special gem :—

January	...	...	Garnet	...	Constancy
February	...	...	Amethyst	...	Sincerity

March	...	...	Bloodstone	...	Courage
April	...	...	Diamond	...	Innocence
May	...	...	Emerald	...	Success in love
June	...	...	Agate	...	Health and long life
July	...	...	Cornelian	...	Content
August	...	...	Sardonyx	...	Conjugal felicity
September	...	...	Chrysolite	...	Antidote to madness
October	...	...	Opal	...	Hope
November	...	...	Topaz	...	Fidelity
December	...	...	Turquoise	...	Prosperity

The seven stones considered under the influence of the seven chief planets are these:—

Saturn	...	...	...	...	Onyx
Jupiter	...	...	...	...	Cornelian
Mars	...	...	...	...	Diamond
Sun	...	...	...	...	Sapphire
Venus	...	...	...	...	Emerald
Mercury	...	...	...	...	Loadstone or Lodestone
Moon	...	...	...	...	Crystal

* * * * *

This then, very briefly told, is the mythology of certain precious stones.

We are now almost at the close of the nineteenth century. Would it be quite irrelevant to ask: Are we more exempt from superstitions than our ancestors?

The question may, I think, be answered in Montaigne's words: "*Les faiblesses humaines ont toujours été les mêmes ; elles ne font que changer de nom.*"

Mother and Child.

By F. G. L.

WE had left London a week before, and it seemed as though we had reached another world.

Silence was all around us, only broken now and again by the wild cry of the northern diver as he sailed away miles over our heads ; a mere speck in the far deep blue. What peace ! what rest ! after the hot turmoil of a London June. How cool and refreshing sounded the soft, dreamy splash of the water against the yacht's side.

Vernon's hard features wore a less anxious, moody expression than usual. Nita, his motherless girl of eight, seemed to drink in the loveliness, and to expand like a parched flower after summer rain.

She would sit for hours on deck, gazing out towards the limitless silver sea, and up to the great shining mountains, at whose feet nestled the bright little clusters of painted wooden farm-houses. The pure, still air, the calm, strange light of those northern, nightless days, which made you feel as if you had already passed from time into the eternal daylight, seemed to fill the child's mind with a sort of wondering rapture.

She had always been left very much to herself, and to her dreams ; poor, sunny-haired little Nita, for, naturally enough, the second Mrs. Vernon, her stepmother, was supposed to be exclusively wrapped up in her own son and heir. She regarded the little girl, whose mother, alas ! was still alive, as one of the many drawbacks which attended her own married life. Vernon, himself, hardly ever noticed the child. Still, when the doctors ordered change of air, and absence from Mademoiselle and lessons, for Nita, he ordered that the child should accompany the yachting party, and his orders were wont to be given in a voice and with a look which always ensured their immediate fulfilment.

Poor Vernon, feared, almost hated, although universally flattered and deferred to, on account of his enormous wealth ; I, his

insignificant, half-crippled cousin, alone understood the agony of his deeply-wounded heart, and pitied him from the bottom of my own.

He had shown me the despairing letter his first wife had written to him, with no address on it, and sent to him through her family lawyer, to ask him for Nita, after his second marriage was announced. The answer was a harsh refusal, but I know what it cost him to write it, and how long he held the paper in his hand, the letter that had been written by his first and only love, before he could make up his mind to burn it. And yet he was very indulgent to the second Mrs. Vernon, who had fulfilled her mission in this world by giving to the Vernon millions her rosy-cheeked, robust baby heir. There would now be no danger of Nita inheriting his estates—poor little Nita, whose deep blue eyes and small fine features reminded him daily of his never-forgotten misery. And Nita's mother? All through my sickly boyhood and youth I had loved her, and she, with her frank, warm nature, had responded kindly to the poor cripple's devotion, and had always treated me like a favourite brother, and for her sake I loved her child. For Nita's sake only, had I accepted Mrs. Vernon's grudgingly-given invitation to join the yachting party. Alas! how thick a veil shrouds even the nearest future!

And now, as the yacht threaded its way through the innumerable islands, and along the rocky shore, and every moment some fresh beauty appeared, Nita's delight grew unbounded.

Sometimes it was a high, dark rock, where thousands of wild birds made their home, or else we glided past some little station, consisting of a large white farmstead, and a cluster of wooden houses, all coloured in the brightest rainbow hues by paint and weather, and often perched on the very edge of the clear water, and reflected in its depths.

And when the yacht emerged from the narrow channels on to the broad silver ocean, where, to the north, lay faint blue islands, like clouds on the horizon, and the coast to eastward was one giant, rocky wall with peak upon peak piled up towards the sky, then Nita clasped my hand tight, and her eyes grew large and dark.

She had been allowed to stay on deck the first night we reached the "land of the midnight sun."

"Uncle Donald," she whispered, pulling down my head to her little rosy mouth, "is this Heaven, where mother is?"

This fiction of her mother being in Heaven was steadfastly believed in by Nita, and I, for one, dreaded the time when she must learn the truth.

Just then Mrs. Vernon came on deck, followed by her constant shadow, Captain Dashwood.

She passed Nita without a word or a look ; only she seemed to stiffen as if the child's presence were an offence to her, and Nita shrank, and clasped my hand tighter, and all the bright, interested expression vanished from her little face.

Mrs. Vernon was pouting, and she flung herself into a deck chair and turning to me, she said crossly :

"Isn't it too bad, Donald ? Here is Charlie going to desert us, and Minnie and Gertie, and I shall have no one to fight about, and no one to flirt with, for of course you don't count, you are so much too good for us !"

Minnie and Gertie were two of Mrs. Vernon's most sprightly young lady friends ; at present sailing with us. They made no secret of the fact that they considered themselves "very much sold" by being forced to go shares with her in the attentions of one solitary bachelor. As a hump-back, minus any large and compensating rent-roll, I, as our kind hostess had truly intimated, "did not count." It was not for such poor fun that they had come yachting in Ascot week ; so their listless looks proclaimed to all.

"I promised Phil and Davenport, and Morris," said Charlie Dashwood, in soft deprecating tones, "and I'm a fortnight late, as it is,—you know it is an early river. Now really, happy thought," he continued, glancing humbly at Mrs. Vernon's angry face, "Why shouldn't we all go and look them up, and hook a forty-pound salmon apiece ? There is capital mooring for the yacht just opposite their diggings, and it would do the beggars all the good in the world to see a lady again ; brush them up a bit, you know ; they are probably all raving cannibals by this time."

"Oh ! how delightful," exclaimed Mrs. Vernon. "John was saying this morning that Mackay feared our supply of milk would never last till we reached Tromsö ; so we could land and beg some from your friends. That will decide John," she added ; "at least, I hope so."

"Let's get the map and see where Vickstrand is," cried Gertie.

Her face, as well as her sister's, had considerably brightened at the idea of looking up "Phil" and "Davenport," and "Morris."

"And if they are sick of catching salmon, why should we not take them for a cruise?" cried Mrs. Vernon gaily, "and leave you, Charlie, behind?" She bestowed a very fascinating glance upon Captain Dashwood.

In a few moments they were all eagerly studying the maps, and making plans for surprising the fishermen at Vickstrand. Then Mrs. Vernon rose slowly and went below, for hers was the least pleasing and most difficult share of the business, and consisted in cajoling John into altering the yacht's course.

In a few minutes she reappeared, quite radiant, and when she reached the group her pretty, beaming face proclaimed the success of her mission.

"Just fancy," she said, "John agrees—isn't that a miracle? But he says he must go on to Tromsø for his letters. You know what an absurd fuss he always makes about his letters. So we are to put him on board the coasting steamer at Salangen to-night, if we can catch it in time, and he will go on to Tromsø while we go to Vickstrand. We will pick him up afterwards." "I suppose," she added in a different voice, turning to me, "that you will go with us—to look after Nita?"

"You have fathomed my thoughts, Mrs. Vernon," I replied. "Besides, Davenport is a great friend of mine, and I shall be glad of the opportunity of seeing him."

This announcement raised me considerably in the estimation of Minnie and Gerty, for Davenport is a whale among *partis*.

They both tried to pump me concerning him, much to my amusement, and one or both kept me company all the way to Vickstrand, after we had deposited John Vernon at Salangen.

We reached Vickstrand about one in the morning, in broad daylight, of course. Vickstrand is rather a poor-looking farmhouse, but it is situated at a stone's-throw from a majestic river, which teems with salmon of prodigious weight. The scenery is rather flat near the mouth of the river, and the entrance to the fjord is very wide, but it runs up a long way towards grand-looking mountains. When Dashwood, who had gone ashore to the house, returned on board with the unwelcome news that all the fishing party were away at a little house seven miles up the river, and would not be back till the following evening, the ladies

decided to lose no time, but to go off in search of them, in whatever *carrioles* or *stolkjaerres* they could procure.

"Why don't you go and explore the fjord?" said Mrs. Vernon to me, as she saw my eyes fixed on the wonderful peaks to the north-east, up the fjord. "Take the yacht up and do some sketches, and come back when you like."

I could see she was longing to get rid of me. I was a damper on the fun and frolic of the party; but it was Nita's imploring face that decided me.

"Very well, thank you very much, Mrs. Vernon," I replied. "I am a poor fisherman, and I can see Davenport before we leave again."

Captain Dashwood made a faint effort to induce me to remain. He was a kind-hearted, though empty-headed, young man; but I was too enchanted at the prospect of being alone, without any disturbing and frivolous chatter to spoil my enjoyment of the marvellous scenery.

They were all safe on shore. I had used my brief authority to force Nita to go below for a good sleep. The child's eyes were getting too bright in the midnight sun.

I paced the deck, watching the fjord slowly narrowing under the great mountains, as we steamed slowly up. There was a good deal of navigation required, and the Norwegian pilot seemed seriously absorbed in directing the movements of the yacht.

"I have hardly ever been here; only once last summer," he said to me, in his capital English. "No steamer comes up here; and yet, strange to say, there is a splendid place, a very fine place indeed, at the head of the fjord, at Gyllienfoss, and a great English lord and his wife live there."

"Who are they?" I asked, not very curiously. "Is there a good river?"

"Yes, a very good river, but not known. The English lord has bought all the fishing rights, so it is never let, and he has bought the shooting rights too, for miles round; and they never leave the place, summer or winter, even in the three months when there is no daylight; and they never have any visitors. All the farmers near the fjord are constantly wondering about them; but then, as I always say, the English are such a strange people. What a trouble they take, to be sure, to catch one salmon with a rod and a fly, instead of netting and trapping them by the thousand like sensible people. And the people at Gyllienfoss, they get all their

letters and parcels from Tromsö. The lord fetches them himself in a little steam-launch, when he might get them sent from Vickstrand so easily. I can tell you, the weather is sometimes very nasty outside the fjord for a small steam-launch. I saw the English lady once," he continued, enchanted at having found so good a listener. I was rather interested in his account of these strange people. "She had hair like the little girl on board the yacht has, sunny gold, not flaxen white, like our girls ; and she can do everything. She can fish, and shoot, and swim, and in the long winter nights, when the upper part of the fjord is frozen, they skate for hours under the stars ; for with us in the winter, you know, the nights are often as bright as a summer's day."

I was really interested—"Can we get a glimpse of their place?" I asked.

"Oh, yes ; of the house, certainly. It is at the end of the fjord I don't know if we shall see them," he added, doubtfully ; "they don't like strangers, by all accounts, even their own countrymen." I could not help speculating on the reasons which made this English pair hide themselves and live such a strange, lonely life, in this secluded place. "The house is not so large as the King's palace at Throndjem," went on the pilot ; "but it is ever so much finer ; all carving and balconies, and every summer, the people tell me, the lord has wonderful plants and flowers from France ; and he fetches them himself from Tromsö, and plants them all round the house ; of course they all die before the winter.

"Fru Larsen (she is the farmer's wife at Maaredal) told me she had seen the house, inside ; and she could only hold her hands up, and marvel at the richness of the place ; and at all the strange, beautiful things in the rooms. And Fru Larsen told me, when her little girl was dying of croup, the English lady came and nursed her.

"When any of the children are ill Fru Larsen sends for the English lady, and she comes in her steam-launch with medicines for them. When the youngest girl was dying, Fru Larsen sent for the lady ; and just then a great storm came on ; no boat could have lived on the fjord ; so the lady walked all the way along the rough shore, where there is no path, and came in to nurse the child, looking so cool and fresh and lovely, that Fru Larsen said she must be as strong as she is good."

Nita had come up from her sleep and her breakfast, and with a glorious sense of freedom, no father or stepmother to crush her with their black looks, was rushing from one end of the deck to the other. She was having a steeplechase over piles of cushions and footstools which she had actually dared to bring up on deck. Her bright hair flying behind her as she ran, caught my eye, and I thought of her bright-haired mother as I had last seen her.

The picture rose vividly in my mind of Violet on the day I had last seen her, in their house in Piccadilly. It was after the terrible scene with Vernon which decided her fate.

Vernon, beside himself with jealousy and rage, had struck her before Arthur Maxwell, and she had risen, flushed and proud, and had taken Arthur's arm before he, maddened at the sight, could rush on her husband. Then Violet, still holding Arthur's hand, had left Vernon's house in the light of day, before us all; and bravely and rashly had gone with her love to whatever doom was to be hers. Poor, warm-hearted, impulsive Violet. Perhaps if she had given herself, or been given, time to reflect, the thought of Nita would have stopped her.

I heard nothing more of her till I read of her marriage in Paris to Arthur Maxwell. It took place as soon as Vernon obtained his divorce. Since then, though I had made every possible inquiry, I could hear nothing of them.

Perhaps these English people, the pilot had told me of, who had buried themselves in this strange way in this far country, had some story like Violet's and Arthur's. However, they were fortunate enough to be rich, whereas my beautiful cousin and her second husband were desperately poor. He was the son of the rector, well-born but poor; at Violet's old home in the country, and many a time in the years long gone by, had John Vernon and I, her big cousins, felt a budding jealousy of him. For already the pretty, fairy-like child displayed an open preference for her "village playfellow," as John would call him, a fierce scowl even then disfiguring his dark young face.

"You don't know the name of these English people at Gyllenfoss?" I asked the pilot.

"No. People say," he whispered in awestruck tones, "that they are Irish Nationalists, but I should not like to betray them."

I could not help it. I laughed; and the pilot, much offended, proceeded to explain to me how dangerous such people might

be to the safety of old England, and he assured me the English Government offered enormous sums for their capture. It was about ten o'clock when we came in sight of Gylliefoss. Nita shouted with childish glee when she first caught sight of it. Indeed, it looked a charming place, on this brilliant day. A large Swiss-looking chalet with balconies and gables beautifully and quaintly carved, standing in a park-like meadow dotted with clumps of birches which sloped down to the water's edge.

Behind it, at a little distance, rose a great wall of rock, grey and purple, and crowned with pines, and vast pine forests stretched away upward to the bare peaks, on which lay large patches of snow.

But the chief beauty of the place was the gorge to the left of the house, where the wall of rock opened suddenly and a great mass of white foaming water came tumbling down, from a height of nearly a hundred feet into a magnificent salmon pool.

"There must be a grand river there," I said; "what a pool! But how can any one stand the perpetual roar of the waterfall? Why, it's only five minutes' walk from the house!"

"In Norway we hardly ever *see* a waterfall, much less *hear* it!" answered the pilot with kindly contempt, and he proceeded to enumerate all the chief waterfalls of his native land. I remember, the number astonished me.

"Oh! do let us land, and go and look at the lovely house," cried Nita entreatingly. "Oh! look, there is a lady coming out of the verandah. Oh! how pretty she is. Do look, Uncle Donald!"

"Yes," I answered. But I did not know what I was saying. I trembled all over as the lady began scanning the yacht through her field glasses. "Come below at once, Nita."

The child stared at me in frightened surprise.

"I am going to land," I said; "but I will come back soon; promise me, Nita, to stop below till I come back."

She promised me at once, and asked no questions, as any other happy child would have done.

Trembling, and feeling as if I were dreaming, I asked for a boat, for I had recognized the lady of the chalet.

It was Violet Maxwell, John Vernon's faithless wife, and poor Nita's mother

The mad wish to see her again, to speak once more with her,

now that this strange chance had led me to her hiding-place, possessed me to such an extent that, against my better judgment, which said most imperatively, "Turn the yacht back, at once," I was soon speeding towards the landing-place.

Excitement seemed to give me wings. In less than ten minutes, poor cripple though I am, I had panted up the slope and stood before Violet.

She had recognized me also, and was on her way to meet me. I could not speak. I had too much to say, too much to ask, and the words seemed to choke me as I looked once again, after all these years, at her beautiful, calm face. Quite calm, and ten thousand times more beautiful than ever, not a trace of all she had gone through, not a line of the passing years, to be seen on her perfect face.

"How have you found me?" she asked, and her blue eyes darkened, and a tiny frown changed her expression.

"And Nita?" she added, after a pause, and the peaceful look vanished from her face.

"She is here, Violet," I said, taking her hands, "in that yacht." It seemed too cruel not to tell her.

"Here! Then I must see her. Let me see her, Donald."

"That is Vernon's yacht," I answered helplessly.

"What is that to me?" she answered proudly, though she flushed deeply. "And Mrs. Vernon, is she here, too? and——and the heir?"

She looked at me defiantly.

"Oh, you see I know everything. I make Arthur get me the papers. The papers are the only difference there is between living here and being in one's coffin."

"Oh, Violet," I exclaimed, deeply shocked. "Is not Arthur's love something better than that?"

"Oh yes!" she said; her eyes filling with tears. "Arthur is wonderful. I am enough for him—at least, he says so; but he—he could never understand about Nita. You can't understand. No man can. I never talk to him about her. I never think about her if I can help it; and now you have come, and it is all over—all the forced peace. If I could only see her once; just once, Donald, only just kiss her sunny little head. Is she still so fair? Oh! I think it would be easier to bear, afterwards. I could live on that for a long time."

I knew I was wrong, but I was carried away by this strange meeting, and I told the sailors, who were hanging about the landing-place, staring at my beautiful companion, to take the boat back to the yacht and bring Miss Nita.

Violet and I sat down on a mossy stone to wait.

"Tell me everything, Violet," I said breathlessly.

"What is there to tell?" she said. "Winter and summer, summer and winter, we live here—we are rooted to the spot. I could not endure anything else, you know, and sometimes I think I can hardly endure this. Those great grey mountains are my prison walls, Donald, for ever and ever. No more of the world for me than for any convict at Portland, or at Toulon."

"But that is just what I wanted," she went on. "To be utterly forgotten ; to disappear and have the right to live as I choose. I could not bear to be pointed out as a woman with a history, at Monte Carlo or Venice, or some such place, where people like me generally are found."

"Like you ! there is no one like you," I exclaimed.

She took no notice of this interruption, but went on with their history since their marriage in Paris. It seemed a relief to her to tell me all. She told me how Arthur had sold everything he had in England and had bought this place in Norway because she had been enchanted with it at first. She told me how hard he worked, how he wrote, and was strangely successful in making money ; how he was always planning some fresh amusement for her, or trying to get her some new luxury, how perfectly happy he always appeared to be.

"That is my only comfort," she went on. "I believe he is perfectly happy. He has taught me to shoot, and fish, and snowshoe in the winter, and it all helps to kill time, as well as the poor Rjyper, and salmon," she added, with a sad little smile.

How could I have thought she looked happy. Radiant with health and beauty it is true, but now the poor sick soul had thrown off its mask before me, and I saw how hopeless was her misery.

I was glad when she told me Arthur was fishing up the river. Perhaps, if I saw him he might drop his mask, too. "And yet why should he wear a mask?" I said, angrily, to myself. "Has he not his heart's desire? And how many men on this earth ever attain to theirs?"

Violet sprang to her feet. The boat was at the yacht's side now, and a little figure with long golden hair was being lifted carefully in by the sailors.

"I don't know what is to be said to Nita," I said helplessly.

"Leave that to me," answered Violet.

She was walking up and down, and her tall slight figure in her plain white serge gown, made me think of plump Mrs. Vernon in all her wonderful, overdone yachting suits; but we all know comparisons are odious; and the boat was drawing near.

Nita jumped on shore and ran to me, but Violet took her hand and said, quite calmly, while the child's earnest astonished eyes were fixed on her lovely face:

"Uncle Donald has sent for you, my dear, because I knew your mother."

"Oh, did you?" Nita's shyness disappeared as if by magic. "Oh! did you know poor, darling mother? You know she is dead."

She submitted to being kissed, and hugged her new friend heartily in return, and then began prattling about her poor mother, asking Violet a thousand questions about her. I walked behind them, and was amazed to see how well Violet played her part. We went to the chalet and sat on the verandah, and Nita was regaled with fruit and cakes; and then we wandered about, and looked at the waterfall, the two always hand in-hand. Time was slipping away, but they had quite forgotten it, and so had I, absorbed in watching their happiness. It was nearly four o'clock when I heard a well-known sound, which made my heart leap into my mouth. It was the whistle of our steam-launch coming into the bay, evidently with Mrs. Vernon's party on board. She had evidently altered her plans, and given up the first arrangement of the yacht returning to Vickstrand.

"That will be Mrs. Vernon coming back for Nita and me," I said nervously; "we must go at once."

Poor little Nita. Her usual blank, sullen expression returned at once, and she unhesitatingly transferred her little hand from Violet's to mine. She was so evidently in a desperate hurry to get back and escape any reprimands, that poor Violet gazed at her with sad comprehension.

"Won't you come with us, darling?" said Nita, hugging her friend and trying to drag her down to the boat.

"No, my dear child, we must say good-bye here," answered the poor mother as firmly as she could.

"Oh, I do love you! I do want to stay here," said Nita, beginning to cry. "Tell me your name, please," she added, kissing Violet's hand.

"Maxwell," answered Violet haughtily, as she caught my warning glance.

The name conveyed nothing to poor little Nita, who had never heard of Arthur, but I was horrified at the possible consequences of her knowing it.

"I shall see you again, Violet," I said, as we got into the boat.

She did not answer. She turned away and walked towards a boat lying a little way off along the beach. She got into it and rowed off round a point of land, and disappeared from our view.

I must say my heart quailed when I saw Mrs. Vernon. I was well acquainted with the danger signals in those two bright red spots on her dark cheeks.

"Where *have* you been, Mr. Gordon?" she said, stiffly and sourly. I was only "Donald" when her temper was at "set fair." "I have been waiting for ever so long, and I have had to come all this way along this dreadful fjord to find the yacht. Such a waste of time! Why, you must have been hours and hours here; and I must strongly disapprove of Nita going into strange houses. One does not know anything about these Norwegians. Take Miss Nita below," she ordered her maid, with a look as if she would far sooner have ordered: "Throw Miss Nita overboard." She dashed down behind her, not vouchsafing me another word.

The maid came up again in a few minutes to collect Mrs. Vernon's cushions and various impedimenta, and I heard her confiding to the steward in no gentle tones: "She is in a tantrum, she is; all along of the gentlemen taking Miss Minnie and Miss Gertie out fishing, and leaving her with old Lady Davenport; and Captain Dashwood took Miss Davenport out in a boat, ha! ha!" and the amiable maid, with a joyful giggle at her lady's discomfiture, disappeared again.

I, meanwhile, watched Violet's boat, and saw her land and pull it up on the shore, just opposite the yacht. Then she sat down, and looked at us through her field-glasses.

I was just maturing a plan of leaving the yacht, and throwing myself on the hospitality of Davenport, at Vickstrand, in order to be near Violet and Arthur, when Mrs. Vernon's maid came puffing up on deck again.

"And now, what do you think?" she said to her favourite steward, who was pottering about, arranging the deck chairs: "I have got to go and tell the captain we are to stop here three hours, because she has got a headache, and wants to land in that shady place over there." She pointed to a wooded little creek, near where Violet was seated.

"She just wants to bully the child, I know, and let off the steam that way."

Hearing this, I thought it better to follow Mrs. Vernon and her step-daughter, when they went off in the steam launch.

So I took another boat, and landed a little way from where they did, ostentatiously carrying a large sketch book, and then I made my way, through the bushes, to Violet. She rose and gave me her hand.

I whispered to her, for though there were plenty of juniper bushes and clumps of birch trees between us and Mrs. Vernon's "shady nook," I was terribly afraid of a meeting.

"Violet, they are here; won't you go?"

"No, let me stop, Donald," she murmured pleadingly; "they can't see me, and I can just see her little dress. It won't be for long. They will soon be going off."

She crouched down in the bushes, and I knelt beside her.

"And now," said the step-mother, in such a harsh, loud voice that we could hear every syllable, "explain what you mean by going off with that disgusting prig, to call on strange people, who may be goodness knows who."

"Uncle Donald sent for me," murmured the child.

"How dare you excuse yourself? Have I not given you strict orders that you are never to see any one without me? Are you not a sufficient disgrace and burden to us already?"

"Disgrace!" repeated Nita wonderingly, but with a touch of anger in her frightened voice.

"Yes. Disgrace. Don't stand glaring at me in that defiant way. Who knows who that woman was Donald took you to see? Perhaps some shocking creature, like your mother. And you may just as well know, once and for all, that it is all

nonsense about your mother being dead and in heaven, where she certainly will never be. She is alive, and a nice disgrace she is to you and to all of us."

"Mother is alive?" cried Nita. "Oh, where is she? I must go to her."

"You little fool," cried Mrs. Vernon, in furious tones, "if you ever say I told you she is alive I will whip you." She seized the child by the shoulder and struck her several times.

Violet, pale, and with dilated eyes of horror, was about to spring up, but I held her as tightly as I could, and whispered: "It will be worse for her, it will make it ten thousand times worse for her. You know you can't take her."

She sank on the ground again, and covered her face with her hands. Mrs. Vernon had got up, and was moving away from us, evidently dragging Nita with her.

We could no longer hear distinctly the words she still was pouring forth on Nita's devoted head.

"You told me she was happy," said Violet, lifting her unutterably sad eyes to me.

"Yes, indeed," I answered. "Mrs. Vernon does not often take any notice of her, and at home she is well treated by the governess and the servants, she is such a lovable little thing."

"I could see she was not a happy child," said the poor mother. "What am I to do, Donald? What shall I do to save her?"

"You can do nothing, Violet," I said sadly. "Oh! my heart bleeds for you, but I must tell you the truth. The law gives Nita to Vernon."

"But what will her future be? Think of that. You know John Vernon, how hard and relentless and unforgiving he is, and his wife hates the child. She will have a wretched childhood, and then she will be forced to marry the first rich man who asks them for her, if he is the greatest brute alive, just as I was forced to marry. And then——"

"And if you took her, if you decoyed her away; forgive me, Violet," I said, "what would her future be then? A happy childhood; but afterwards, when she grew up? Perhaps she would think this life here a prison, too, and there would be no other possible for her. You can't foresee all the difficulties. And then, Arthur. Would he sanction it? Would he like it? And you could not leave him for Nita."

"No," she cried passionately. "Too many fetters. All bound round my life and my child's by my own sin. God forgive me." She thought deeply for a few minutes, and then she said quite calmly :

"Let me see her, just for a little while, Donald. They saw you land and go to sketch. You must follow them and offer to take Nita for a wal ."

I could not refuse her ; and chance seemed to favour us, for, in a short time, I came upon Nita alone, sitting on the ground, and deeply engaged in watching an ant-hill. Her eyes were red, but otherwise she was quite absorbed in watching the ants. Such is the power of passing impressions at eight years old.

She sprang up with joy when she saw me.

"Oh! do you know, I am so happy, Uncle Donald," she cried. "Mrs. Vernon says mother is alive, and I am going to look for her all over the world, and you must help me, won't you?"

"And in the meantime, darling," said Violet, who had followed me, "before you look for mother, will you come for a walk with me?"

All traces of sadness had disappeared from Violet's face and voice when she saw the child's beaming face.

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Nita. "Mrs. Vernon said I might stop here for two hours. She has gone back to the yacht, because she thinks the others are coming, and she said Uncle Donald could bring me back ; so do take me for a nice long walk."

She slipped her hand confidingly into Violet's.

"Very well," said Violet. "We will go, and Uncle Donald shall meet us here. We don't want him now, do we?"

"No, we don't want him," echoed Nita laughing.

Then her tender little heart smote her, and she ran back and gave me a kiss. So, much against my wish, I was left by the shore, after giving strict injunctions that the walk was not to exceed the two hours. Then I sat down and tried to pass the time by sketching. In what seemed to be an hour, I looked at my watch, and saw that it was eight minutes to seven. They had left me at twenty minutes past five.

I began to grow anxious that they should not exceed the time allowed, and so I set out on a scrambling walk to look for them. What with climbing over rocks, and rather heavy going in boggy

places, it was half-past seven by the time I next looked at my watch.

I had reached a pretty little path, which led up past the waterfall on the right, up the bank, and then along the river above the fall. On the other side of the river was the high road, also on a high bank.

I sat down and watched the river for a few minutes, to rest after the steep ascent. Such is poor human nature! that my mind wandered from Violet's sorrows and Nita's sad future to a consideration of the most likely-looking salmon pools. There was a long rapid, ending about fifty yards above the fall, and then the river glided on, swift and smooth, till it reached the great fall, of which I could only see a line of spray, though the thunder of its mighty waters nearly deafened me.

Suddenly, from just above the rapids, a light, narrow boat shot down the river at lightning speed.

Very dangerous work, I thought, recognizing Violet and Nita as the sole occupants of the boat.

Violet was rowing ; at least her hands were on the oars. Nita was sitting in the bottom of the boat, her head resting against her mother's knees. She caught sight of me, perched high up on the bank, and waved her little hand to me, and cried out:

"Oh, it's such fun, shooting the rapids, Uncle Donald."

"Turn the boat in to the left, Violet," I shouted.

The boat was flying along the strong current, and I could see there was a back-water into which she could, perhaps, still force the boat.

Perhaps! She never attempted to move the oars. She glanced up at me as the boat flashed past, her face illumined with joy and triumph.

Paralyzed with horror, I saw what she had made up her mind to do, and what no man on earth could now stop her from doing.

I saw her bend forward and clasp the child in her arms, and hide the little face in her neck. One second more, and the boat flashed over the thin line of spray, where the cruel thunder of the fall re-echoed among the rocks.

Half-blinded and dazed, I stumbled back along the path which led to the pool at the bottom of the fall. As I hurried

down the path, I heard a cry of exceeding anguish, and I saw a tall, fair man coming along the path from the house. I recognized Arthur Maxwell. He must have seen the wild dash of the frail boat over the foaming height on to the cruel rocks below.

So Violet took her child's fate into her own hands, and who can tell if death was not more merciful to them than life had been.

Life's Set Prize.

By G. G. CHATTERTON.

"Let a man contend to the uttermost for his life's set prize, be it what it will."

"Do you so much admire it, then? To me it looks commonplace enough. You can see its exact ditto in quite half a dozen shops in London."

"So you can. But to me the commonplace is removed when it leaves the shop and represents to you its reason."

"It's a date; yes, certainly. Anthony gave it me because the very first hour of the year was the one in which we became engaged."

The speaker twiddled the brooch between finger and thumb; and the diamonds forming the figures 1900 shone and sparkled and shot out little rays, blue, green, and red. Then she dropped it beside her on the table, took up off it a long black stocking, and thrusting hand and wrist deep into its recesses, resumed the darning of its heel on which she had been occupied.

"I am awfully fond of Anthony!" she broke out presently, taking her cigarette from her lips to knock its ashes into the little tray for them and hinder their getting mixed in with the stocking.

"I am sure of it," murmured her friend, a sudden crimson flush suffusing her soft face. Inwardly she was wondering whether any woman could well avoid being awfully fond of Anthony.

"What did you say, Emma? I couldn't catch. I wish you would smoke. Then you would be obliged to hold your head higher, and be more distinct."

Both girls laughed. Emma's backwardness in not living up to Kate's lead was always a sort of jest between them, in nowise disturbing their friendship.

"Yes, I am awfully fond of Anthony," Kate reiterated slowly, running her long needle in and out carefully as she spoke. "And yet, do you know, Emma, often I think that I made a mistake when I proposed to him."

"When you proposed to him!" Consumption of nicotine was not now needed to raise the attitude of Emma's head; she flung it high in astonishment, staring wide-eyed at her companion. "Kate! I never knew you did!"

"Didn't you?" Kate said easily. "Yes, that was how it happened, at the ball at your house to dance in the new year. It was past twelve o'clock when we became engaged, hence the meaning of the brooch we have just been discussing." Happening to glance from her work at her friend's face, she burst into a gay fit of laughter. "Why, Emma," she cried, "you look as scared as if I had announced that I had murdered Anthony at your dance! You funny little soul; you are, I declare, a St. Paul, 'born out of due season,' amongst us. You should have matured some ten years ago, whilst women still shrieked over bikes and ran away from cigarettes and imagined that being equally yoked with men could take place but in a by-path to Tophet only."

"I think I can mature very comfortably in my own time," Emma returned with spirit. "Though most girls smoke and ride bicycles and behave like men, still they do not, I feel certain, all propose to them. Oh, Kate, how could you?"

Kate laughed again.

"How could I? The difficulty, my dear, was not to could, but to could not. There, thank heaven, that's done," tossing the mended stocking aside. "I shall be glad when the day comes that I can afford to get my stockings darned for me. And now, Emma," lighting a fresh cigarette and stretching herself luxuriously back in her chair, "let me tell you how I strayed on into proposing to Anthony. To begin with, he was so handsome—well, after all, he was always that, but his handsomeness helped that night—. . . and I had been dancing so often with him, and for some time before had been going so much about with him—I went to a dozen places alone with him, and had tea'd about with him all over the town—that really I quite felt as if I ought to say something or other decisive to him, . . . and I was feeling so inconveniently fond of him; . . . and, in short, after the interchange of a few sentimentalities respecting the old year in a corner whither we had retired after welcoming in the new one amongst you others, I, as I before observed, proposed to him."

"How lucky for you he accepted you. Oh, Kate, what would, what *could*, you have done supposing he hadn't?"

"Done better, perhaps, in some ways; fallen back entirely on my profession, and let it do for me."

"But I didn't mean in that way. I was thinking of the horror

and shame and humiliation of being refused by a man. Kate, how could you risk it? What would you have done?"

"What does a man when he is refused by one of us? Pooh, Emma! Don't be melodramatic. But sometimes, indeed," she added ruminatively, "I have thought it almost a pity that Anthony and I did slip into this betrothal. It seems to me bound to go to the wall a bit in the interests of my profession."

"Do you mean to say that you will put your profession before it?"

"Well, sometimes it seems like it. I often think it is a mistake concluding an engagement to be so all-sufficing to a woman. Yesterday, for example, I was quite surprised to find how put-out, vexed, irritated almost, I felt with Anthony—dear Anthony—for coming in just when I was settled happily down to a study of the gastric tubuli. Of course I was careful not to show it a little bit to him; but there was the feeling all the same. And it made me afterwards reflect that, as I have said before, it was perhaps half a mistake my drifting into this engagement at all."

"Half a mistake!" burst out the other girl with an unusual display of wrathful vigour for her; "a whole and immense mistake, indeed, when you can speak of preferring the study of gastric—whatever it is—to the society of a man like Mr. Beauchamp!"

"Yes, you like Anthony, I know, and you do not like gastric tubuli; therefore, of course, you look at things from such a different standpoint to mine—as regards the latter, I mean. To me my profession is very dear, above everything, in this way: it seems to me any woman and every woman can turn herself into a wife, whilst every woman cannot have in her the makings of a doctor or a surgeon. And I feel as if I could succeed, as if bound almost to succeed, in the medical line!"

Now Kate Fraser spoke with real enthusiasm; her face lit up; her voice rang decisive and triumphant. Surely medicine, not marriage, appeared her platform in life. She had cut herself adrift from home and parents to study it, had renounced the greater portion of the gaieties naturally acceptable to young womanhood for its dry and difficult ways, nor grudged the exchange; and then, with a dash of that inconsistency which lurks in human nature, in woman's and in man's alike, had tangled within her web this skein conflicting of a lover; a lover

idle, well-to-do, with small affinity for the workers of the world, only a compassion towards those to whom labour was necessity, who, it turned out, as her affianced, expected that she would, if not at once at any rate by degrees, let the whole affair drop naturally,—cut the entire concern, as he said. Decidedly much of their mutual attraction must have been based upon the laws of persons veering towards their opposites. He was so deliciously lazy and easy-going, she so superbly active and energetic.

“Why mightn't we do a *matinée* of one of the plays to-morrow?” he suggested an afternoon immediately after his acceptance of that proposition of hers which had so shocked her unprogressive friend. The idea of enlarging upon their previous liberty occurred pleasantly to him.

“Delightful!” she readily agreed; “only we must choose a late-beginning one. In the morning I have a lecture on organic compounds to attend, and may be delayed over it.”

“Oh, chuck the organic compounds! Besides, you won't keep on grinding over those horrid things now, eh?”

“Of course,” she rejoined, surprised. “Why not?”

“Well—er—obvious reasons, I should have thought. Have you no heart, Kate?” smiling.

“Certainly, an excellent one,” she laughed back, “in perfect working order, constructed of striated muscular fibre, same as your own.”

He put his fingers in his ears, beseeching her to spare him technicalities, and they laughed and sat and smoked cigarettes, with a discussion over the respective merits of their tobacco, each upholding his and her own.

“Try mine—‘Turf Club’—you are bound to like them.”

“Thanks, no; my ‘Special Blend’ are far superior.”

And next day she had returned from the pursuit of organic compounds in time to go with him to the theatre, and had found him a charming variety from the lecture, whilst he more than once had swept the house with glasses and come to the same decision—that she was by long odds the handsomest woman it contained.

After all, too, there was something piquante and out of the common in this engagement to a girl situated as she was, instead of still affixed to the roof parental, as were so many others. This easy, unfettered dropping in and out of her rooms was so much

nicer than would have been visiting her encompassed by her family circle, as had occurred very forcibly to him when she had taken him to her home to present him as son and brother-in-law to be ; and he had sat thoroughly conscious that he was running the gauntlet of acute valuation from parents, open-mouthed scrutiny from younger brethren, semi-censorious criticism from elder sisters, and keenly appreciating the contrast between all this and the delightful ease of the *tête-à-tête* with no one beyond Kate herself to please, which he might feel to be accomplishing without strain or effort.

"I broke away that I might get on with my work ; it was so impossible to study there amongst them all, though, of course, I am very fond of them all the same," she had told him, and he concurred heartily in the removal, and in his inner mind foresaw how she would in turn break away from all this as well, pitching study to the winds in favour of life merged into his.

This was the view he now took of it, though during the early days, whilst acquaintance was ripening into friendship, he had accepted the fact that she really would in course of time blossom into an M.D., as was her announced desire and hope ; and it had interested him to visit a working-woman in her den and find her fresher and gayer than many of the idlers, her fine physique and exuberant vitality, which had at once so attracted him, preventing her growing tired or fagged after her studies, for which he subsequently had come to cease pitying her, as originally, out of the instincts of his idle class, he had done.

It had appeared to him as a terrible life for a lady one day, as he was growing increasingly interested in her, when he watched her get out of an omnibus to pick her steps across the mire to the footway, holding up in one hand an umbrella and in the other a bundle of papers. She was carefully though simply dressed and neatly shod, and looked, he thought, very nice indeed ; but the women he was accustomed to descended out of carriages on the projected arm of a footman, who held more a miniature tent than umbrella over their persons, and permitted glimpses of delightful frills and flutters of silken edgings as they twitched up skirts tripping on their sheltered way.

Miss Fraser nearly ran her umbrella into him, landing hurriedly out of the mud alongside him, before she had discovered who he was.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" she exclaimed brightly. "Fancy that! Lucky I did not demolish you!"

"I was on my way to make a call on you," he said.

"Well, we can go on and make it together," she rejoined briskly. "I am going back now after an anatomy lecture."

She had more the air of a person fresh from some game or enjoyment than a lecture bound, in his supposition, to be dry and arduous and a bore; and stepped so springily beside him, and was in such bright spirits, that she entirely routed his semi-sentimental compassion for her as a woman returning from study by means of an omnibus and then a walk under drizzling rain on dirty streets.

"Wouldn't you like a hansom?" he suggested.

He had only been awaiting the passing of one unoccupied to hail it when he had caught sight of her.

"A hansom? Oh dear, no. We're quite close to my place, you know. I find that 'bus so very handy, which is lucky, as I couldn't stand hansom."

One seemed now superfluous to him, too: an energetic personality is infectious. She ordered up tea when they arrived, observing that it would be a blessing to get it. The lecture-room had been stuffy, the subject difficult rather. She piled away her papers methodically.

"I must attack them again in an hour," she said, "whilst it's all fresh in my head."

"I am not interrupting you now, I hope?" he hazarded politely.

"Not the least indeed. I am very glad of your company—for that time."

He found the brusque sincerity belonging to a busy woman set you greatly at your ease.

"You are forgetting this," he said, extending to her a little packet.

"So I am. Thank you. An interesting one, too. Would you like to see? The entire palm of the hand," opening without waiting for his answer. "Those are all the bones of it—the five metacarpal ones."

"Really!"

"Yes. See—put out your palm, and I can place them."

"No, thank you," he laughed, drawing back. "I should feel that you were about to dissect me before my time."

And she laughed too, and put aside the bones in a little careful pile upon her papers, and agreed that it was much better to get away from shop for a time and chat about other things. And not so very long after this had come about their engagement.

"Emma Bonham was so horrified when I mentioned to her that it was I who took the initiative in establishing that," she told him.

"She needn't have been. First or second to speak, what difference did it make? You only forestalled me by a minute. I was on the point of proposing all through our foregoing skirmishing observations."

And they were so happy in the consequences, both so thoroughly and delightedly pleased with their bright novelty, through the weeks following, when Kate certainly had put aside her close attention to her studies in favour of Anthony, and he had taken for granted that she had abandoned serious ideas of a profession. She was so clever and so brimful of energy, so immeasurably cleverer and more brimful of energy than any other girl he had ever come across, that he concluded it was but natural that she should persevere in reading a bit and attending a lecture or two at present. He wouldn't care about its going on for ever, but by-and-by would come scope of a different description for her talents and activity. Things would right themselves. There would be housekeeping and entertaining and pulling up here and there the items he left undone—all the interests and duty, pleasures, in short, that go to fill the measure of womanly sphere and enjoyment. These all did he map out for his Kate, with a man's natural, lawful pride in feeling himself the lever appointed to raise her out of an arduous career into them.

Both, then, appeared entirely content with arrangements as they existed; but these weeks came prior to the day when Kate Fraser had imparted to her friend how she had been half reflecting that her engagement had been a mistake. A combination of Anthony and physics had been enchanting, but an enchantment doomed to be not abiding. It became borne in upon her that an affianced and a profession were conflicting elements, and that each, by nature of their order growing more encroaching, were forcing upon her that life must turn a choice between the two: Anthony Beauchamp *or*, not *and*, therapeutics and pathology.

To give up her Anthony seemed hard; to give up her

career seemed—harder! And yet how was she ever to combine them? Already was Anthony a grave interruption to study, taking for granted that it should immediately be pushed aside when he arrived: and Anthony arrived each day; and how could she bear to lose ground in her studies?—she, the pride of the College of Medicine, foremost of all the competing students therein, prized and commended and a future foretold for her by the doctors and surgeons at whose lectures she displayed such unusual ability and power of grasping the difficult, responsible subjects held forth upon.

She was, as they assured her, by nature fitted to succeed in either branch of the profession; both lay at her feet to pick up as she chose. In surgery her nerve, coolness, and robust physical strength would stand to her need, whilst for general practice amongst all the students none was her equal for delicacy of touch in all the finer dissections, in swift neatness in tying artery or ligament, in keenness of perception for diagnosis. In short, the entire course, theory and practice, was with her *con amore*—her taste and pleasure, not difficult drudgery. Anthony had come in upon it as some extraneous superfluity, a sudden victory of woman's nature in a moment when woman's nature was in the ascendant; and as such, by not irrational sequence, she was discovering that Anthony, as paramount in accordance with his imaginings of his position, was, as she phrased it, half a mistake.

Half a mistake! As well a whole in their situation, and when during the days of betrothal from either side one suffers consideration of the other as a half-mistake, the sooner, in the name of outraged Eros, the entire error is confessed and laid frankly bare, the better.

Anthony as friend and chosen comrade to pass intervening periods of leisure with had formed a delightful adjunct; Anthony as acknowledged ruler of her hours became an incubus. She stood a halting-house between her fancies, faithless to both. Some desperate step towards revelation she would have been forced to take had not, as often happens in a desperate case, a slight incident opened the way for her.

He was hastily, almost recklessly, sweeping aside traces of the work she had been engaged on at his entry, books, papers, pens, and ink.

"Take care," she cried; "take care, please, Anthony dear. That is a borrowed skull."

"Why on earth borrow a skull?"

"To study sutures—it seemed hardly worth buying—and that is a very nice skull. A friend lent it me."

"Furthermore," persisted Anthony a trifle impatiently, "why study sutures?"

"Why study sutures? Well, Anthony, if I did not study them, how should I learn the difference between a squamous suture and a true one?"

"And what would that matter? I mean, what would it matter if you never were to learn?"

"Matter greatly, Anthony, of course. To attain to the X Y Z I must master the A B C of the affair."

"And what necessity have you of attaining to the X Y Z? Dearest, leave that to other women, older women, ugly women, different women altogether, women who have need of a profession, as you have not, nor ever will have, thank God. Fling it all aside, my dear girl, beginnings and endings and all, now and at once, seeing that you will never want any of it, and stick to your present career, which means me," smiling fondly at her, "graduating for your future one, which means also me. Oh, Kate!" stretching out a hand to hers.

But Kate had turned abruptly away. She took the skull up in her hand and walked across the room with it, ostensibly to deposit it in safety, in reality because that in her heart had risen a tumult and at her throat obstructed a difficult lump, for something told her that thus suddenly had come to her the crisis of her history, and that now in these moments to follow must she part with one or other of its prizes.

Anthony, too, rose and lounged after her, and for a minute the couple stood and faced each other mutely. Two young persons, warm and healthy-natured; two fine and well-matched persons, filled with life, and fibre, and vigour, and between them, in her hand, grinning at them,—Death.

"Put down the beastly thing!" was what he said, and she obeyed him.

"That's right," he resumed cheerfully; "lay the whole concern aside."

Again he extended a strong, sinewy hand to her, and this time she placed her own within it.

But "Oh, Anthony! Anthony! I can't; I can't," were her words. "Don't ask me; I cannot."

The lump that had risen in her throat would not disperse, and jerked them out almost in sobs.

"Cannot what? Don't ask you what? Come and sit down."

He drew her back to where the chairs stood, their chairs, the low, wicker cushioned ones wherein they had sat and smoked and chatted happily together. But, as he was seated, she abandoned hers, and instead preferred to kneel upon the floor close up against him, her head upon a level with his head, facing the contrary way, and there into his ear she poured her confession steadily. A whole, long, breathless, gasping sentence swept it all out, as he never interrupted by an exclamation.

"So," he said when she came to a stop, "what I am to gather is that you no longer want to marry me?"

It was horrible to hear his voice thus, hard, stern—he who customarily let slip his words in easy, careless intonation.

"Oh, Anthony, dear Anthony——"

"You find that you prefer following up surgery, and discover me to be a mistake," he pursued relentlessly.

"Ah, it is I who am the mistake," she rejoined swiftly, "a fraud, a wretch, a horror. Mine is the whole fault, the whole miserable blunder. Forgive me, Anthony; pray forgive me. I ask your pardon; I need it. . . . I ought to suffer for it all, and I will, I will. . . . It is hard—hard for me as well, I mean. Oh, Anthony, if it is not you, it will be no other man—never any other man, Anthony—never!"

Despite his wrath against her, he felt touched: her words, contrition, attitude, all so unlike, so despairingly unlike, herself. He rose out of his chair and stood; she, hastily forsaking her kneeling posture, leapt up and stood beside him.

"Kate," he said, "I am not going to take leave of you at present, not going to wish you good-bye permanently, despite the things you have spoken. Consider them; reconsider them. I will wait for two whole days. Whatever you then choose to decide will be final."

And he strode away and left her.

She was grieved; she was glad. Sorrow she felt, as well as

relief, and no irresolution. To Anthony her announcement had come as some new idea, suddenly resolved upon, but to her it was the crystallization of an already semi-formed intention.

The day following she made up a packet of the presents he from time to time had given her and wrote her letter of decision with them.

"I am returning them to you," she told him, "with one exception, the 1900 brooch, and that I mean to keep always. Rings in my profession would be impossibilities, knick-knacks to adorn my rooms superfluities ; but the date brooch will be my souvenir of happy days with you and of a friendship which I hope will never fail." She paused, taking into consideration, but unshaken consideration, how that this was her final renunciation of him in any other relation, and her eye fell upon the skull facing her with bald, unending, uncompromising grin. "It is best so," she resumed steadily, though a mist came gently between her and the paper on which she wrote the words, "far best so, dear Anthony. We should have formed but a squamous suture, after all, never a true one ; and mine was the mistake to imagine otherwise. You require, and most truly deserve, the entire heart and mind of a woman, whilst mine, as I ought to have considered, must go straying off after those pursuits unpalatable and inconceivable to you, but all in all to me. You will replace me more felicitously, and that I like to know. For me, I repeat to you what I said before : that after you will come no other man.—Always, my dear Anthony, your truest friend, KATE FRASER."

* * * * *

Three years later Kate Fraser stood in Anthony Beauchamp's handsome drawing-room, tossing in her strong arms the mass of white embroidery and curls that represented his first-born and her godchild. Anthony's wife, her old friend Emma, was looking on. Anthony's self also watched her, and with admiring eyes. Her attitude displayed to advantage her handsome figure ; her finely featured face glowed with life and animation as she smiled and played with the child. The date brooch gleaming at her throat attracted its attention, and the father noted the little restless fingers picking at it.

She was taking leave of them all for an indefinite period.

After brilliant success in all her examinations and the award of the gold medal for anatomy, she was going out to India to practise there before settling down in London to her profession.

"I do wish you were not going so horribly far," Emma sighed. "I do hope the climate may agree with you."

"Sure to," Kate declared with confidence. "Good-bye, dear Emma."

"Good-bye, dearest Kate, and you will be sure to write and tell us all about it, and I will write, too, constantly, and let you know about everything, and how baby grows, and everything."

"Yes, do. Good-bye, Anthony"—as she had never left off calling him—"good-bye, dear friends, both."

He saw her down the stairs out of the door, bade her God-speed with lingering hand-clasp, the finest, noblest of her sex he had ever come across, he said to himself, for not the first time, as he turned from her. Alas that she should have been so misguided, so firmly and determinedly misguided! That view of her dancing his baby remained before his eyes.

"Poor Kate!" babbled Emma. "Poor Kate! I really do feel so sorry for her."

"Why so?" he queried with unusual sharpness.

"Well, indeed, perhaps it is foolish, after all, for she doesn't seem the least bit sorry for herself, only I hope she never may be. It would be dreadful if ever she repented it all—this doctoring business, I mean," she added hastily.

"She'll not repent," said Anthony; "she'll do all right," and went away to smoke, dismissing the discussion.

Emma enjoyed a delightful hour seated on the ground with baby crawling all over her, whilst ever and anon she marvelled as to how Kate *could—ever—*

Kate bowled swiftly off in her hansom; she had still some things to see to before her start.

"Anthony is a dear," she reflected, "a dear, as he always was and always will be. But oh, how right I was! Housekeeping, servants, babies. Time absorbed with no adequate compensation. One could buy Anthony at too great cost. . . . I have succeeded, I am succeeding, I shall succeed, in what is my set prize. . . . How right I was! How glad I am!"

Aunt Agatha's Husband.

THERE are certain people, not defunct, who are never spoken of by their relatives without the prefix of "poor"—"poor James," "poor Mary," &c. These individuals are generally "failures" (like Beau Brummel's discarded cravats), and the compassion expressed for them in the descriptive prefix to their names might often be more justly bestowed upon their unfortunate relatives, whom these "poor" members of the family frequently greatly impoverish. We had no reason in this sense to talk of "poor Aunt Agatha," whose gentle life was of the most blameless kind; and, certainly, in money matters, it was my mother, self, and sisters who were the "poor" portion of the family. Yet I never remember hearing Aunt Agatha named by friends or relatives but with the additional prefix popularly consecrated to the deceased and the unsatisfactory. "Poor Miss Sefton!" said her friends; "Poor Agatha!" sighed my mother. I do not think Aunt Agatha herself was at all conscious of the compassion she excited; a bird born and reared in a cage does not pine for the liberty it has never enjoyed.

Aunt Agatha's life for over forty years had been passed amid a round of petty restrictions, constant restraints, kindly meant tyrannies, and she had at length become as passively obedient to the home authorities as a model nun to her abbess. I never, during the lifetime of my grandparents, remember hearing Aunt Agatha enunciate an opinion save as the echo of her parents' words, or originate a plan, or even express a very strong wish for anything. She was always, as our grandmother proudly designated her, "our dear good girl," as meek and characterless at forty as she had been at four.

My grandmother was a *maitresse femme*, an extremely clever, capable, managing woman. She had married a very gentle and easy-tempered man (probably Aunt Agatha inherited her meekness from her father), and had ruled him (and nearly all connected with her) kindly, but despotically, ever since her wedding day. My father, though never an undutiful son, had

been the only person who had ever ventured to cross his mother's will, and had done so in the two most important steps in his life ; his selection of a profession and his choice of a wife. In the first instance, a fixed resolution to take Orders instead of being called to the Bar, my grandmother was moved to give at length a grudging consent ; but when, some years later, my father "threw himself away" (as my grandmother phrased it) upon the daughter of his first rector, the breach between mother and son was less easily healed. In fact, it was only ten years after his "wretched marriage" (I again quote from my grandmother's words) that death, the great reconciler, terminated the estrangement ; and mother and son met in peace before the latter departed. Having consented to accept my mother and her children, my grandmother kept her compact faithfully. She transferred to us the leasehold of a pretty cottage near her own larger mansion, and added sufficient to our modest income to enable us to live in comfort. I say my *grandmother* did all this, because, in all business or domestic arrangements, she was the acting party. No one ever paid much attention to my grandfather, though it was his signature which appeared upon the cheques. Looking back, I sometimes wonder that my own mother agreed as well with her husband's parent as she certainly did. They were in many things greatly alike ; both capable, energetic, clever women, who liked their own way, and always took it. My mother would venture to openly disagree with my grandmother, even contradict her ; and yet I never remember hearing Granny snub or scold her, as she so often did her meek husband and submissive daughter. Perhaps, like many despots, it was not altogether displeasing to my grandmother to encounter some one who dared to oppose her ; perhaps she secretly respected my mother for her independence of spirit. Anyway she never attempted to control and coerce her granddaughters as she did her own daughter ; and we three girls, at sixteen and under, enjoyed an amount of independence never allowed to our "poor aunt" while her parents lived.

Aunt Agatha was a gentle, faded-looking little creature, with pale blue eyes and very light hair. She always, in a way, reminded me of a flower which had grown up in the dark and become pale and fragile-looking in consequence. She was quiet in movement, soft-toned in voice, absolutely colourless in

character. Never having been allowed to express decided opinions on any matter, she had gradually lost the power of forming them. Her whole life had been laid down and mapped out for her by her mother's stronger will. My grandmother selected her clothes (of a description far too juvenile for her actual age), decided what books she should read, vetoed those she should not, laid out her money for her—in fact, ruled her as completely in her middle life as in her early childhood. Personal friends of her own age Aunt Agatha had never known; grandmother had “never approved of foolish intimacies among young people”: Aunt Agatha had never been to school, never had a governess, being “educated under her mother's own eye,” as that parent proudly boasted, and at forty kept up the same petty routine of small daily tasks—the practising, and the reading of Italian, and the painting, and the embroidery—which had filled up her time some twenty-five years before. My grandfather was an invalid; they saw little or no company at the Moat, and as rarely entered into society. But, as my grandmother would remark, “Agatha had sufficient amusement in her occupations and domestic duties,” and if the latter had ever wished for a wider, freer life, she had never at least ventured to breathe the heretical sentiment even to my mother. Indeed, Aunt Agatha always appeared perfectly contented with her monotonous existence. Freedom, if never enjoyed, is possibly not missed. But we three merry girls, enjoying the full liberty of thought and action which is usually granted to young folk nowadays, used often to echo my mother's “poor” in speaking of our aunt; whose life was rather akin to that of a royal or noble prisoner in days gone by; respectfully waited upon, surrounded with luxuries, but never allowed to act independently. At the same time, their daughter was the idol of my grandparents' hearts, only they never realized that she had outgrown early childhood.

A sudden change came one day. My grandfather died suddenly, and my grandmother was affected by the loss, as apparently strong, self-reliant people frequently are. With all her arbitrary propensities, she was a woman of deep affections, and her bereavement utterly broke her down. A slight chill, contracted soon after her husband's death, found her apparently unable to battle against its effects; and in two months' time Aunt Agatha was alone in the world, save for us. I have often

thought, recalling that time, that I can fully understand what the "Dissolution" must have meant to countless hapless cloistered votaries. A nun suddenly thrust out of the convent which had sheltered her from childhood could not have been more at a loss in the everyday affairs of life than was poor Aunt Agatha. That she was wealthy proved only an addition to her burden ; a very minute income would, at least, have entailed less care and thought in its laying out. But I shall never forget the face of perplexed despair with which, after the funeral, Aunt Agatha sat listening to the patient explanations of the old family lawyer, who vainly endeavoured to make clear to her confused understanding the mysteries of rents and leases, investments and shares, cheques and bankers' pass-books. Aunt Agatha had never ordered an article of any value or paid a bill for herself ; she knew as much about drawing a legal document as a cheque. As in her early youth, a small sum had been handed to her monthly for "pocket money"—postage stamps, stationery, small charities, and the like—and even this expenditure was periodically audited by my grandmother, who would criticize thus : "Sixpence in stamps this week, Agatha, and fourpence last ! I hope you are not falling into the habit of writing a number of idle, useless letters in the present-day fashion. Two shillings to Betty Coles ! Tell me another time before you send her anything, because your father never meets her in the village without giving her sixpence. I see you paid a shilling less than usual for your last gloves. That is but poor economy in the end, you will find."

The petty sum intrusted to Aunt Agatha each month had seldom escaped some such corrective criticisms regarding the way in which it had been laid out, and now she found herself unrestricted mistress of over £4,000 a year.

Like the prisoner liberated after nearly half a century's captivity, whose only prayer was to return to his dungeon, where he had become at home, Aunt Agatha wept for her lost state of bondage. Had there been any old servant ready and willing to assume the mastery, I think she would have fallen a submissive prey. But, though the domestics at the Moat had grown grey in the service, they had been as little accustomed to independence as Aunt Agatha herself ; my grandmother had always been the moving spirit of the house, the energetic ruler, to whom all looked for guidance ; and her removal seemed to take

away the chief spring which animated the domestic machinery. Even the elderly cook confessed to feeling "lost" without her mistress, and hesitated to give decided advice upon the question as to whether Betty Jones or Mary Bates, two rival candidates for the vacant "odd girl's" place, had better be engaged, my grandmother having died without settling this question. Old James, the coachman, was perhaps the most comforting to Aunt Agatha of all her domestics, for he openly began to tyrannize, which was doubtless pleasant and familiar to my aunt. In his old mistress's lifetime James had always exhibited a certain independence; now he did pretty well as he liked.

"That road would be just murder to my horses, Miss Agatha," he would answer boldly, if poor Aunt Agatha expressed a desire to drive anywhere up a hill; and if the weather was too cold, or too damp, or too windy to suit James's incipient rheumatics, Aunt Agatha was sure to be informed that "James don't quite like the look of one of the horse's legs, and Miss Agatha mustn't take him out to-day till James sees if it's going to be a strain or not."

Of course Aunt Agatha submitted, and I think was all the happier for being "under orders" again.

"If some one doesn't look after your sister-in-law, my dear," said a kindly, managing friend, "she will certainly do something silly; she has no more idea of managing her own affairs than a baby. Why don't you go and live with her, or make her come to you?"

But my mother prized the independence of her own home too much to relinquish it, and the idea of thus "clubbing households" was anything but acceptable to us girls. My mother did all she could to assist and advise, and Aunt Agatha for the first months of her mourning clung religiously to all the old rules and regulations of the house, and lived as far as possible in the old grooves. Gradually, however, *very* gradually, we discovered some little changes, some movements of emancipation. We heard that Aunt Agatha had begun to have a fire in her bedroom, an indulgence hitherto rigorously prohibited, "Young people do not require such luxuries except in case of illness" being my grandmother's dictum. Next we found that our aunt's breakfast-hour was later, her luncheon often a "movable feast;" we caught her more than once perusing a sensational novel; she was occasionally late for church. In fact, the strict rules

which once hedged her round were being visibly relaxed. After a year we were scarcely surprised to hear that our aunt had accepted an invitation to travel and winter abroad with some old friends of her father's. This was a wild plunge into the giddy world for Aunt Agatha, who had never spent a night out of her own home before ; but the influenza fiend had attacked her in the autumn, and it was her doctor's desire that she should winter in a warmer climate. There was something almost pathetic in the delight with which the elderly little spinster seemed, when the question was once settled, to look forward to this first holiday of her dull existence.

"The change will do Agatha all the good in the world," said the friend who had arranged the expedition. "If she travels about with Henry and I and sees something of the world, the poor soul will lose that nervous, shrinking manner, like an owl in daylight, which she has now in society. I mean to join all the '*table d'hôtes*' and make Agatha mix and talk with people."

So our aunt departed with her friends ; leaving us girls, I fear, rather envious, and regretting that a like pleasant excursion was never likely to fall to our lots. We heard occasionally from the travellers, who appeared to be enjoying themselves extremely ; then came a letter to my mother from Mrs. Hayter, the organizer of the expedition, which gave less pleasant tidings. *Qui s'excuse s'accuse*, runs the French proverb ; and for two pages Mrs. Hayter stood on the defensive against possible censure before unfolding her budget. "Of course you will all blame me, and I do not say the engagement is at all what Harry and I could have wished, but you are aware that Agatha is of age (she was forty-five last birthday), and therefore her marriage——"

"*Marriage!* Aunt Agatha going to be married!" my sisters and I cried in chorus.

"Why, she must be fifty, *at least*," said Margaret, with that exaggerated estimate of the years of their elders common to pretty seventeen.

"And quite a dowdy old maid. What *could* make any one want to marry ~~her~~?" put in Sarah.

"Your aunt is a rich woman, my dear," said my mother drily ; "and now, if you will allow me to go on with my letter——"

"Shall we be bridesmaids, I wonder?" interrupted Margaret. "I

shouldn't care to be, though, to such an old bride. Of course the wedding——”

“The wedding is already over,” said my mother, who had rapidly skimmed over the contents of the epistle. “Here, girls, take the letter and read it for yourselves.”

Three eager heads were bent over the page, and three eager voices in turn read out scraps of its astonishing tidings, with comments and exclamations. I must do ourselves the justice to say that the idea of future loss to us, as her possible heirs, had never entered our heads when we heard of our aunt's matrimonial prospects; it was simply such an amazing fact that she should be married at all. My mother, who really liked her sister-in-law, sighed as she reperused the letter. Briefly stated, divested of explanations and extenuations, Mrs. Hayter's news amounted to this: that while at Cannes they had made the acquaintance of a very agreeable fellow-guest in the hotel who had paid his court to my aunt, but so quietly as to be unnoticed by Mrs. Hayter (who had herself been ill for a few weeks and laid by in consequence) until matters had come to the crisis.

“Harry never saw anything, of course; men never notice these things; and, after all, when Agatha said her mind was made up, what could any one do?” wrote Mrs. Hayter, apparently conscious that her chaperonage had not been of a very satisfactory character. Probably she herself had not calculated upon Aunt Agatha's mature charms winning a suitor some fifteen years younger than herself. “When Agatha talked of marrying nearly immediately, of course we did all we could to induce her to reflect a little; but I regret to say that I received a few lines from her this morning stating that she had left the hotel to be married at the Consulate. Harry went off there at once, but the wedding was over some hours before, and Agatha and her husband had started for Paris.”

“Fancy Aunt Agatha *eloping*, like a Lydia Languish!” screamed Margaret.

“We have ascertained all we can about this Mr. Symthe,” went on the letter. “He is said to be a connection of the Symthes of Westmoreland—very respectable people, you know. He is not rich, but has some private means, and has been resident at this hotel for some months. He says he came from Australia had a small farm there, I believe; he is quite a gentleman in

manners and appearance, and I hope things will turn out better than you may fear. After all, Agatha has means enough for both."

"And, thank Heaven, the *capital* is safely tied up," said the old family lawyer grimly.

I will pass over the description of the reception of this surprising news in the neighbourhood, the amazement, the exclamations, the curiosity, the presages of evil. Aunt Agatha herself wrote briefly, but in a tone of unwonted decision. It seemed as if all her will-power, latent hitherto, had been called out at one important moment.

"I am sorry to have grieved my kind friends, but in a case where the happiness of my future life is concerned I must judge and act for myself," wrote the meek little woman, who had never yet pronounced a decided opinion upon the colour of a bonnet ribbon.

"The god of love—*ah Benedicite*—

How gracious and how great a god is he,"

quoted Sarah, who was a student of old poets; and we laughed at the "miracle love had wrought" in inspiring Aunt Agatha to unwonted rebellion. At least our relative was very happy—at present—and for six months we continued to receive cheerful letters from the elderly bride, whose "honeymoon" was a prolonged one abroad.

At length the wedded pair returned to their English home; and our eager curiosity was satisfied with a sight of the bridegroom. My mother, who had pictured to herself a "gambling fortune-hunter," was agreeably surprised by the quiet, gentlemanly-mannered man of whom Aunt Agatha was so palpably proud. His manner towards his wife was perfection; attentive without foolish demonstrations of affection; and even the disparity between their ages was less noticeable than we had expected, Mr. Symthe looking his full thirty years, while Aunt Agatha, under the combined influence of happiness, and a style of dress suitable to her age, appeared far younger than when habited in the semi-girlish style in which our grandmother had always arrayed her.

Mr. Symthe was a quiet man, not a great talker, and certainly neither a spendthrift nor a gambler. He took the management of the small estate into his own hands, and he and Aunt Agatha spent great part of their time riding about together; Mr. Symthe

had induced her to learn to ride while abroad. Our only quarrel with our new relative was that he apparently cared so little to enter into society ; the Moat was scarcely gayer than it had been in our grandparents' time, and we girls had hoped for a succession of entertainments there.

"Dear George is not very strong, and is best when leading an outdoor life," explained Aunt Agatha ; though, as our old nurse phrased it, "his looks didn't pity him." Mr. Symthe appeared in perfect health, but he was certainly not a gregarious man ; in fact appeared rather to shrink from entering into society. Of course, later on, local wiseacres said "they had always thought," &c.

A pleasing excitement now came into our own home life : our cousin Jim returned from Australia. We had seen little of him since our father's death, but up to that time he had lived with us as one of our own family. Ten years before Jim had gone out to Australia in "a good opening," and was now doing so well grape-growing that he could afford to take a six months' holiday and revisit us. I had always liked Jim, and now thought he had, contrary to some colonial experiences, greatly improved during his term of exile. Indeed, when our mother suggested a few days after his arrival that Jim should accompany us on a "duty visit" to the Moat, I think we were all secretly proud to show him off as a relative.

"Very likely you and Mr. Symthe may find you have some mutual acquaintances, as he has recently come from Australia," said my mother ; with the true untravelled Englishwoman's classification of our colonies—"India," "Australia," etc.—as snug little places whose inhabitants must be constantly encountering each other.

"*Symthe* ! I never knew any one of that name," said Jim. "I knew a *Smith* once, but that couldn't have been the man. Hullo !" And Jim broke off suddenly as a lady and gentleman came riding slowly down the avenue from the Moat.

"Here is Mr. Symthe," said my mother, but Jim and my aunt's husband had already recognized each other, and apparently not agreeably. Mr. Symthe pulled his horse up abruptly, and his naturally dark complexion turned ashy pale ; while Jim checked a stifled exclamation.

"Let me present you to my husband," said Aunt Agatha, all smiles and graciousness, to Jim ; too engrossed with her pride in

her bridegroom to observe the glances passing between the men.

"I think Mr. *Smith* and I have met before—in Melbourne," said Jim, with some emphasis on the surname.

And Mr. Symthe replied half mechanically, "Yes, in Melbourne."

"When you were in the bank there, and *afterwards*," said Jim in a tone of curious meaning; and Mr. Symthe made no reply, but looked so pale that I fully expected to see him fall from his horse.

"My dear George," cried Aunt Agatha, suddenly observing him, "you look quite ill. Is your head bad again? Do come back to the house and rest! Elizabeth will excuse you."

"Well, my head is not quite the thing this morning, Agatha," said Mr. Symthe, forcing a smile. "I was out rather too much in the sun yesterday, I believe. If the ladies will excuse me," and raising his hat, he cantered off.

Was I mistaken in fancying I heard him murmur the words, "I knew it was bound to come some day," as he rode off.

"Don't mind us, Agatha," said my mother; "we will call on you another day;" and Aunt Agatha, nothing loath, turned her horse and followed her husband.

"Now, Jim," said my mother resolutely, "what does all this mean? What do you know about Mr. Symthe?"

Jim hesitated.

"I don't know if it's worth telling you, now he's married."

"I *insist* upon knowing," said my mother, as firmly as even my grandmother could have put it.

"Well, then, if you *will* have it," said Jim reluctantly, "I knew Smith, as he called himself then, well enough for some years in Melbourne. He was chief cashier in a bank there, a pleasant beggar enough; I used to keep all my money at his bank, and got to talk with him when I went there, you know, and when I stayed in Melbourne he took me about, and he came over to me at my place for his holidays, and that kind of thing ——"

"Go on," said my mother imperiously, as Jim hesitated for a minute.

"Well, there were defalcations discovered in the cash—a forgery case, in fact—and Smith got a term for it," said Jim.

"Aunt Agatha has married a *forgery*, a *convict*," screamed

Margaret ; while Sarah, wise after the event, remarked, "I always *thought* there was something mysterious, *discreditably* mysterious, about Mr. Symthe."

"You never *said* so before," retorted my mother sharply ; while Jim, like the good-natured fellow he was, looked genuinely sorry at the unpleasant revelation he had made.

"I believe Smith is a gentleman by birth, and he was always a good fellow," he said lamely.

"*Good fellow !*" echoed my mother contemptuously. "Oh poor, poor Agatha !"

Great was the discussion all that evening as to the proper course to be pursued regarding Aunt Agatha. Jim, kindly soul, was in favour of "letting bygones be bygones" now the marriage was once made.

"It took me so aback to meet Smith in that way, that I couldn't hold my tongue," he said ; and I think, in his secret heart, was rather sorry for the revelation he had made. But my mother, albeit a most kind woman, was not superior to that curious liking for imparting bad news which is often observable even in the worthiest people.

"It is not just to Agatha to allow her to go on in ignorance of this *dreadful* story. I don't know even if the marriage, contracted in a wrong name, is a real one," remarked my mother ; and accordingly next morning "a sense of duty," as she announced, impelled her to set out on the "painful errand" of "opening poor dear Agatha's eyes."

I accompanied her, as the eldest of the family.

"I daresay I shall have difficulty in gaining admittance. Of course, that dreadful man will be anxious to keep us all away for fear we should enlighten his poor deceived wife," said my mother, in the tone of one resolved to force an entrance if denied it peaceably ; but there was no delay or doubt : Aunt Agatha was at home, and would see us.

"I am come on a very painful errand, Agatha, and I have a very sad duty to perform," said my mother, much in the tone of a compassionate executioner, who has the bowstring in his pocket.

"Thank you, Elizabeth," said Aunt Agatha, rising to her feet and speaking with a quiet steadiness I had never before known her exhibit, "I am sure your intentions are kind. But I

think I know all you are going to tell me. I suppose you have come to say that you know George was tried—and *convicted*—of forgery in Melbourne ? ”

This outspoken frankness so utterly disconcerted my mother that she sat down abruptly and remained speechless. She had come prepared to “break the news,” after the orthodox, well-meant, torturing fashion ; by little hints, and innuendoes, and irrelevant platitudes and condolences, leading up gradually to the grand *dénouement*. And now to find the words taken out of her mouth by Aunt Agatha’s blunt declaration of facts ! There stood the mistress of the Moat, the self-confessed wife of a forger, and in no wise abashed at the situation.

“ You knew it, then ! ” gasped my mother, as soon as she could find breath, “ and you married him ! Oh, Agatha ! ”

“ I only knew the story yesterday,” said Aunt Agatha serenely. “ Out of consideration for my feelings George, had, unwisely, I think, concealed the facts of his false accusation from me.”

“ It was all *too true*, Agatha,” said my mother, shaking her head mournfully. “ Jim was in court all the trial. Mr. Smith was convicted and sentenced, you know.”

“ I am *sure* he was innocent,” flashed Aunt Agatha with unwonted spirit, “ and as regards my marriage, well, I would have done the same if I had heard this story *before* our wedding. I love George ; I *know* he must have been falsely accused and even if there *was* truth in the story ; well, then he needs my love more than ever to comfort him after all he has suffered.”

And the valiant little lady, who had battled for her love even as a timid bird will fight for its young, here broke down into tears.

My mother sat watching her for a few moments, then rose and kissed her impulsively.

“ My dear,” she said, “ you’re a brave woman, and a true, and a good ; and I honour your faithfulness, though maybe you are a bit of a fool.”

And with this somewhat ambiguous compliment she prepared to take her departure.

“ One thing I may tell you, Elizabeth,” said Aunt Agatha, drying her eyes : “ my husband’s real name is Symthe ; I should like your nephew to understand this. George wrote it as Smith in Australia for convenience’ sake, every one so calling him.”

“ Then your marriage is a real one, thank goodness,” said my

mother, afterwards checking herself, as the reflection crossed her mind that perhaps, under existing circumstances, this was not exactly a cause for rejoicing.

"Yes, George and I are one, 'till death us do part," said Aunt Agatha, with a quiet smile.

"My dears," said my mother, narrating the story of our visit to the expectant party at home, "I assure you your aunt stood up quite coolly and told us she had married a convict, as if she expected us to *congratulate* instead of *condole* with her."

"Of course, if she believes him innocent, she looks upon him as a martyr," remarked Sarah.

"Or she may think she can reclaim him, like the good people who are always wanting to give ex-prisoners and bad girls another chance," said Margaret.

"Yes, my dears," replied my mother quietly, "but I always observe that those good people are anxious that this 'other chance' should be in *some one else's* service, not their own. Mrs. Percy, now, is always *recommending* 'girls who want to redeem their characters' to her friends as servants, but I never knew her engage one herself. But your aunt has married this man, and doesn't regret."

"At forty-five one doesn't count honours," said Sarah, rather spitefully. "Aunt Agatha was not likely to have a great choice of suitors."

"Well, my dear," said my mother with a little sigh, "I only hope that she will never regret her generous confidence."

Of course the thing leaked out—such stories always do—though we all declared we had never spoken of it "except among ourselves." Indeed, several editions and versions circulated in the neighbourhood, variously representing Mr. Symthe as a convict who had committed murder, a bigamist, a man who had been the chief of a noted gang of burglars in Melbourne, etc., till the real facts, a forgery to cover some defalcations in the cash under his charge, quite sank into insignificance compared with the sensational additions by which neighbouring gossips adorned the tale. And Aunt Agatha, timid, sensitive Aunt Agatha, who once considered "What will people say?" in every act of her life and would have blushed and trembled before Mrs. Grundy's lightest censure, now boldly faced what many a braver woman might have felt as a "disgrace," with a courage and dignity of

which no one could have believed her capable. Perhaps, like a true woman, she did it to encourage and assist the man whom she loved. Even my mother once hinted to her that it might be as well "if she and her husband travelled for a time till the story blew over."

"Why should I leave my comfortable home?" said Aunt Agatha calmly. "I have told you *my* opinion of George's innocence. He and I are perfectly happy together and independent of all other society. If our neighbours do not consider us good enough to visit, we can very well do without them."

And so the pair remained at the Moat, "brazening things out," as spiteful Mrs. Percy said, although many kindlier neighbours, like old Sir Aubrey at the Towers, admired "the little lady's pluck in sticking to her husband, convict or no convict."

I know that, according to all orthodox traditions, Mr. Symthe should soon have "thrown off the mask" and made Aunt Agatha miserable for the rest of her days. In point of fact nothing of the kind happened. I cannot say if Aunt Agatha was right after all, and her husband an innocent victim of a false accusation. At the worst, there had been some "extenuating circumstances" in the case, as proved at the trial. Becky Sharp was sure she could have been "a good woman on £10,000 a year," and Mr. Symthe may have found it easier to be an honest man upon a large income than a small one; or it may be that the love and faith of his true-hearted, if elderly, bride awoke some chivalrous response in his better nature. Mahomet is not the only comparatively youthful husband who has cherished a very sincere love for an old wife.

I myself soon afterwards left England: Jim, returning to his Australian vineyard, carried me back with him as his bride. We were absent some six or seven years, and when we returned to exhibit our two bonny boys to their grandmother, we found quite a transformed state of things at the Moat.

Aunt Agatha's steady, persistent faith in her husband had apparently carried some conviction even to the local Sadducees; and the Moat was a house with a good cook and a good cellar. Gradually and shyly "the neighbours" had begun to call, to receive, to invite, to accept invitations. Whatever had been Mr. Symthe's previous career, his present mode of life was at least exemplary; and the "shocking story" which had once so exercised

local gossip had faded away into vagueness. As for Aunt Agatha herself, I should never have recognized the timid little "white mouse" of days of yore, in the comely, dignified matron who now presided at the Moat

"Who could have thought that poor Agatha would have shown such courage and steadfastness," said my mother, talking over the matter. "Well, she loved her husband ; that is the only way I can account for it."

At least Aunt Agatha had never cause to regret her marriage ; though I am aware by all the rules of "moral stories" she ought to have repented her rash choice. Many happy years of wedlock were granted to her, and when death removed the husband to whom she had clung so faithfully, Aunt Agatha, like the wife in the old epitaph,

"For a brief while tried
To live without him, liked it not, and died."

At the same time I should not wish my daughter to marry an ex-convict upon the speculation that he may prove as desirable a partner as did Aunt Agatha's husband.

LUCY HARDY.

The Engineer's Story.

By F. B. FORESTER.

I.

"YOU don't believe in that sort of thing?" said my friend the mining engineer. "Well, I'm not altogether with you there. Not that I profess to explain these phenomena, mind you: the longer I live and the more I knock about in the world—and I've been a rolling stone all my life—the more the conviction is borne in upon me that there are things taking place round us, every day some of 'em, that won't bear explanation. What you've just told me may be classed among them; probably it is: I don't profess to explain it. For my own part—well, considering the infinitesimal particle we can guess at—I'll scarcely say know—of the mysteries around us in this world, I'm generally inclined to put down the fellow who's on his feet ready with a cut-and-dried explanation of things verging on the confines of the next as a ten times bigger fool than the one who's content to admit frankly that he doesn't know. You needn't wince, young man; I don't mean you; but I tell you honestly that if you *had* tried to give me a cocksure explanation of what you've just told me, I'd have meant you then, and no mistake. Just put the case before yourself for a moment. A hundred, even fifty years ago, and where was the world then? Think of the advances, the discoveries of science, the inventions of genius, even within that limited number of years. Yet the forces, the elements themselves, brought into play and combination, were all originally there, mind you; they have not been called into existence now or suddenly; and who's to say that we've come to an end of all the secrets locked up in this earth of ours? On my word, I think there was never a time at which a man need show himself to be more careful and less presuming and confident than at the close of this nineteenth century."

"Something behind all this, eh?"

"Well, yes, there is, though I should not have thought of it just now if you hadn't recalled it by talking of that case of telepathy. That's a new word since I went to school, by the way, an instance bearing on what I said just now. We're not all cast in the same mould I know: there's no man

more willing to admit that than I am ; and this everyday world of ours clamours for so much of our time and attention that some of us have little thought or leisure, as a rule, for things lying outside its sphere. But I've a notion that, no matter how immersed and engrossed a man may be with the pressing claims of this money-getting, blood-and-brain-grinding world, there comes to him somewhere and somewhen in his life a breath from somewhere beyond, what you might call a waft or a whisper from the other world. Laugh at it if you like, it's a theory founded on observation, at any rate. Well, now for my story. By the way, what I've to tell you didn't take place in England, but in Spain."

"Spain!"

"Ah, now you prick up your ears. Romance on foot, I suppose you think. Well, I'm sorry to disappoint you, but there's nothing of the sort. I didn't go to the Peninsula to pick up romances. I went to earn my bread at the Rio Tinto mines, down at Huelva. You've heard before from me what sort of place that was, so I needn't enlarge on it now. Not that I had any cause to dislike it, rather the contrary. I liked the hands well enough—a civil, docile, fairly industrious set when you took 'em the right way, I always found them—and I got on in that quarter as well as I could wish."

"Lonely?"

"Well, yes, it was a bit lonely. You see, I was a young chap then, and shy, with a hang-in-the-background sort of way about me, and I didn't care to chum up overmuch with the engineers and the rest of the English staff. Ferguson, the chief, was as good-hearted a fellow as you'd wish to see ; but he had a great notion of keeping us youngsters in our places, and he talked shop *ad nauseam*. Now I didn't want to talk shop : out of sight, out of mind, was my motto then as far as the mines were concerned ; I didn't see the fun, after being stived up in the mine all the blessed day, of wagging my tongue about it all night ; and as I'd a precious deal rather be on the earth than in it, I spent my Sundays and leisure time generally in long solitary rambles in the surrounding country. The peasantry round soon got to know me, and I to know them—what's more, to like them. I've not had much experience of the town-bred Spaniard, but the Spanish peasant, take him for all in all, is a fine fellow, God-fearing, tem-

perate, and as honest as the day. So, as I say, I soon got to like them, and I seldom passed a house without being given door and chair, that's to say, without an invitation to come in and sit down, of which I was seldom slow to avail myself.

"Well, one afternoon—a Sunday it was—I had started off on a long tramp, intending to call at the farmhouse of a certain Diego Sordo, a friend of mine, and finish the evening there. Yes, he had a pretty daughter, but that fact was nothing to me. Marta Sordo was engaged to young Juan Hermoso, the best-looking lad in the district, and never gave two thoughts to your humble servant, and I—well, whatever else I might be, I wasn't the fellow to try to cut in between two happy young lovers and try to spoil sport. I had got well-nigh to the end of my walk, and the *cortijo* of Sordo was already showing white against the hill rising to the west of the valley, when I caught the sound of a queer dull noise repeated at intervals, and coming from beyond a massive shoulder of rock that blocked the view to the left. There were goats about in swarms, and I took it to be nothing else than the clashing of the horns of a brace of billies having a set-to on their own account. Ever seen two goats fight? Well, it's a curious sight; there's something scientific in the way they go about it. A ram, you know, goes straight for his enemy, trusting to the hardness of his forehead, but a goat gets up on his hind-legs and swings himself round with a sidelong sweep, making his horns tell, and a nasty knock he can give with them, you may be bound. Thinking I might as well see the fun, I went out of my way and rounded the shoulder of rock, and you can judge what kind of a surprise I got when, instead of a couple of he-goats, I came upon two men fighting.

"Jove! how they went at it! tooth and nail, I was going to say, only it was worse than that. No good honest bout with fisticuffs this, but a regular set-to with *navajas*. Know what I mean by a *navaja*? A knife, my lad, with a blade as long as your hand, straight-backed, and with the blade sloping, so; and an ugly thing it looks as the sun catches it, and you fancy it looks keen for your heart's blood. They practise the use of them, I am told, so they ought to be able to handle them fairly well; and, to judge by the play these two made, I should say there's no doubt of it. An ugly sight it was to see those two fellows going at it in that lonely hollow, silently, with not a sound but the hard breathing,

the noise of their feet as they shifted ground, and now and then a grating jar that made my blood run cold as steel struck hard on steel. 'Pon my word, the sight looked so out-of-date, so odd a thing in these days, when men fight through the medium of a lawyer and break each other's hearts instead of heads, that, even in the brief moment I stood watching the pair, my mind had jumped back to all the sword-play I'd read about in Walter Scott and the rest of them.

"I couldn't see the face of the one with his back towards me, but I knew the other at once. A big, muscular ruffian, with a phiz that a satyr might have been proud to own, and the look on it just then made me shiver. He'd got a touch on the forehead, and the blood trickling down made him look none the prettier; but I don't mean that. I'd never seen such a look of concentrated hate and devilish revenge on the face of man before, and I knew, just as well as if he'd shouted it in my ear, that, whatever the other might mean, this one at any rate meant death. You can guess I didn't stand there long looking at them; I wasn't going to see two fellows make mincemeat of each other without having a word to say in the matter, and I let no grass grow under my feet as I ran towards them, whipping out my revolver—a handy little weapon which I never stirred without—as I ran. We had about two murders per week on an average in Rio Tinto at that time, so you may think none of us cared to go about unarmed. But, hard though I laid foot to the ground, I was too late. Whether my shout startled him and made him lose his nerve for an instant, or whether he set foot on a loose stone, I don't know, but the one with his back towards me, whose face I had never seen, staggered a pace or two backwards, and went down like a ninepin.

"T'other brute was on top of him in a moment, and my heart jumped and I couldn't see straight exactly as his arm came up and the dull blue blade gleamed in his hand before it went down and disappeared. For the life of me, I durstn't fire, lest I should hit the other, but I crammed on the pace all I knew how. Up came the arm again for another stroke. This time, to my fancy, the blade shone red, and I thought the other was a goner. But in that space of time I'd made good running, and just as the scoundrel was bringing down his arm for the second time, the gleam in his eyes showing worse than the knife, he caught sight

of the muzzle of my little revolver looking at him, heard it bark, and felt the bullet graze his hair as I risked all and let fly.

"He couldn't stand that. He was on his feet *instanter*, and running like a greyhound for cover. I just snapped another cartridge after him, by way of lending additional wings to his heels, and then I stooped down to see to the other.

"He was only a youngster, not more than eighteen, or nineteen at the outside, and I couldn't help thinking, as I went down on one knee beside him, how his mother would have felt to see him lying there white and still. Dead too, as I thought, for his jacket and shirt were full of blood to the left, and I made no doubt that the knife, aimed for his heart, had reached its mark, and sent him to the 'other neighbourhood,' which is the pretty little euphemism they use for out of the world. I never remember feeling more glad in my life than when I'd got at the wound and found that the knife had merely glanced off the ribs, having done no mortal damage, as far as I could tell. I'd had no ambulance training, but there are worse teachers than common sense at times, and unnerved though I felt—for I'd seen nothing of this sort before, mind you—I kept my wits about me, and did my best. I stanchd the bleeding as well as I could, bound up the wound, getting off the *faja*—that's the coloured sash he wore round his waist—and using it for a bandage, and then I began to wonder what I was to do next.

"There was no good shouting ; the house was too far away, and I might have yelled myself hoarse without anything hearing me except goats and crows, or maybe a fox or two. I dared not leave him lying there, either, while I ran to get help. For all I knew, yon ruffian might be lurking close at hand, and I'd seen enough to know that he'd have no scruples as regarded coming back to finish his work. There was only one way, and I had to take it. I'm six feet now, you'll observe, and although no more than two-and-twenty at the time, I was no less then, and broad in proportion ; the lad was slightly built, and, to judge by the look of him, not much of a weight, so I got my arms under him and heaved him up without more ado. Poor lad ! he moaned piteously as I lifted him, and I dreaded, in spite of all my plugging and bandaging, to see the wound break out again before my eyes. But there was no help for it, so I set my teeth hard and pushed forward, keeping my eyes skinned and going, as they

say there, 'with the beard on the shoulder' all the way. Somehow I couldn't, for the life of me, get rid of the notion of that blackguard's coming up behind with swift, noiseless footsteps to plant his knife alongside my backbone, and every now and then I kept facing sharply round, with the senseless boy in my arms, to make sure that he was not dogging me. In that case, there would have been nothing for it but to drop my burden and defend him and myself as best I might ; and my blood being up by this time, not to say that the handling of the lad and his utter defencelessness had roused the pity in me, I candidly own that, although I was in ignorance of the rights of the case, I would have let fly at the scoundrel without hesitation if he had showed as much as the ridge of his broken nose. How I thanked Heaven for that revolver during the bad quarter of an hour spent between yon hollow and the farmhouse !

"I shouted loud enough to wake the dead as soon as I got within hail, and Diego Sordo himself, with his daughter, her lover, and one or two of the servants, came crowding out one after the other, thinking the world was coming to an end. What they must have thought when they saw me coming staggering up the slope, with an apparently dead man in my arms—for, by the way, his head lay back on my shoulder, you'd have taken him for that—and with blood-stains all over my clothes, I didn't know, and didn't care either. Between the exertion and the excitement I was about done for ; and heartily glad was I to see young Juan Hermoso clear the hedge of prickly pear at a leap, and come speeding down the slope like a roebuck to meet me.

"*'Dios mio !'* cried he the moment he clapped eyes on the youngster. 'It is Alvaro Desmayo !'

"*'You know him, then ?'* I gasped, as well as I could speak for panting.

"*'Yes, señor, well. I know the meaning of this, too,'* he added, looking at the unconscious lad more closely. 'You have done bravely, señor ; allow me to assist you now.'

"Diego and his daughter had come up by this time, and the latter, at a word from her father, sped back to the house to warn her mother and to prepare a bed for the wounded lad, whom her lover and his prospective parent carried between them. I was only too glad to resign him to them, for I can tell you I had had about enough.

"There had been a woman in the case, it appeared, from what I learned from Juan. There always is, of course ; but this time, for a wonder, it was not jealousy. Alvaro Desmayo had a sister, and the ruffian who had so nearly made an end of him just now had offered the girl an insult so bitter that no fellow with the feelings of a man would have thought for a moment of allowing it to pass. The sympathies of Marta's lover were all on his side, of course ; and I needn't say that mine ranged themselves alongside as soon as I knew the rights of the case. I didn't blame him, not a bit ; and right glad was I when, an hour or so later, I was told that the patient was conscious, and anxious to see and to speak to the brave *caballero ingles* who had saved his life.

"One's inclined to fancy, you know, when one hears of two fellows fighting to the death with knife-blades, that there must be something tigerish about them. I don't know how it might be with Pepe Tuerto—the ruffian was well named, by the way, for he had as one-sided a phiz as you'd see anywhere—but there was nothing tigerish about Alvaro Desmayo. After all, we've our way of doing things, and they've theirs ; and, for all I know, the notion of setting to with one's fists might suggest gorillas to them. He was only a lad, as I said, and a handsome lad, too, now that the blood-stains were gone, and I'd time to look at him ; indeed, so delicate and finely cut were his features, and so slight his make, that when he glanced up at me from the lace-edged pillow—they're keen on that sort of thing in Spain, and a mud-floored cottage will have bed-linen that wouldn't disgrace a palace—I'm blessed if I didn't think at the first look that the soft dark grey eyes, bordered with lashes close on half an inch long, were those of a young girl. I saw my mistake in a moment, of course : his features might be delicate, but there was nothing effeminate about him. They had put him to bed, and Diego Sordo, who knew something about surgery, had dressed the ugly gash in his side, so that he was fairly comfortable ; but he had lost a lot of blood, and could scarcely speak. He looked up at me, and his eyes did his tongue's work for him ; and I—well, when I saw him like that, remembered the ghastly wound I'd seen, that had so nearly let his life out, and knew that it had been all for the sake of his sister, I—I—well, by Jove, I could do nothing but think of mine, and stand there looking like a great baby, gripping his slender olive fingers a good deal harder than I meant

to, and grinning like an ape, just because the confounded tears were so nearly running over. But he never winced, only smiled. He didn't say much, good reason why: he was too weak; and the Señora Sordo, his self-constituted nurse, kept breaking in with her 'Quiet, quiet, boy,' on what he did say the whole of the time, pulling herself up to offer apologies to the *caballero ingles*, 'but it was not well for the *muchacho* to talk.' However, I understood that he wished to thank me with all his heart for the service I had done him, and to place himself at my disposal for the rest of his life.

"I didn't take much notice of that, for, you see, the very first thing etiquette enjoins on a Spaniard is to place himself, his house and family, *á la disposicion de usted*; so I grinned again, nodded, and told him it was all right. We mayn't like to admit the fact, but there's no denying that the foreigners have the pull of us in giving or accepting thanks—a Spaniard doesn't know what it is to be awkward. But Alvaro was evidently in earnest this time, for the blood came up over his olive face, he murmured a word or two that I did not catch, and then traced on the counterpane the sign of the cross with his delicate fingers. Juan, who was standing by, told me afterwards, when he was walking back with me to Rio Tinto, that Alvaro had sworn on the cross to serve me whenever I should have need of him. Peasant! Yes, he was a peasant; but there's this about the Spanish peasantry: that they're born, live, and die gentlemen to the core, and you'll never find better breeding or manners than among them.

"He had a hard time of it, poor lad, from what I could find out. Fever set in, and he had a stiff fight to pull through. I used to come up now and again to ask after the boy; I could not see him; and they told me at last that he was mending, and his strength coming back. As for Pepe Tuerto, *se despidió á la francesa*; that's to say, he took French leave, and we were no more troubled with him at Rio Tinto. I didn't stay there much longer myself, for I was sent to England on business long before Alvaro Desmayo's wound had skinned over, or he himself was about again; and although I heard incidentally from time to time that he was going on well, I never saw him again living. I had no more to do with Spain for six or eight years; and this time the contract I was on took me up north to superintend the working

of a copper mine not far from the southern slopes of the Pyrenees. By the time I was settled there, and had got things shipshape about me, all the incidents that had taken place at Rio Tinto had long ago faded from my memory.

II.

“THAT’S the first part of my story. Now for the second.

“It was a different climate and a different country up north, I can tell you. Down in Andalusia snow had been an unknown quantity, but up on the slopes of the Pyrenees we had more than enough of it. Dreary surroundings they were in winter, and dismal enough I’d find it when I sat at night in the lonely little office near the shaft of the mine, and listened to the wind moaning and shrieking down from the mountains and to the bare arms of the pine-trees clashing together in the forest close at hand. Somehow I always used to think of the old stories about murderers’ bones rattling on the gibbets whenever I heard that noise, and I’ll candidly own that, between that kind of scare and another more tangible dread, I got the jumps badly at times. The people in that part of the country were not over-reputable, as a whole ; taken all in all, the district had a bad name ; and I, as a stranger, a heretic, and, in view of the mines being owned by an English company, an interloper into the bargain, found little goodwill come my way. There’s no good denying that when, sitting there alone at night, the thought of a surprise by half a dozen armed ruffians and of being flung, living or dead, down the open mouth of the shaft, would come over me, I needed to summon all the nerve I’d got to induce myself to stop another night in the place.

“D’you remember yon bit in the ‘Spanish Student,’ ‘Are there robbers in these mountains?’ ‘Yes, and worse than that—wolves?’ Well, those words used to come to my mind often enough, for they exactly hit the case in point. There were enough about of both kinds of the gentry to suit any decent man ; and I, for my part, had more than I wanted of them. I didn’t so much mind the wolves ; they were cowardly brutes, and I had good allies in the shape of a brace of revolvers, and a friend on whom I could rely to the last gasp : my dog. Know the breed ? They use them to guard the sheep and cattle, not unlike a St. Bernard, great, powerful brutes, with a grip like a bull-dog’s ; and I tell

you when rigged out with what's called a *carlanca*—that's a stout leather collar, studded round with spiked nails—he'd be a bold wolf that would dare to come to close quarters with one. My dog—Toro I called him, partly because the village he came from bore that name, partly, too, because his big, massive head and curly front always put me in mind of a polled Angus bull owned by my father—was game any day of his life to settle the biggest dog-wolf ever whelped ; and he'd done it, too. So, as I say, I cared little for the wolves. But the human wolves ! Well, Toro could do his part there, too ; and he was a friend on whom bribery and corruption were thrown away. But still, as I told you, I didn't half like it, more particularly on the nights before pay-day, when all my hands had gone down to the village for the night, and I found myself with not a soul near me, in yon lonely shanty close to the mouth of the yawning shaft, with over a thousand pounds in specie in the safe, no company but a dog, and the half-mile of forest that lay between me and human companionship swarming with wolves, and possibly with worse.

“ You'll wonder when I'm coming to the point of my story. Well, it's pretty near now.

“ The last night I ever spent there alone was a stormy one. The wind had been high all day, but it increased towards night-fall, and roared in the pine-trees like demons broken loose. Next day was pay-day, I'd a cool thousand in silver locked up in my safe, and I felt, as I always did on such nights, the responsibility strongly. It was with me as with most of us, you see : on each successive pay-night the realization of the tremendous risk I was running would come on me so heavily that I would make up my mind dead certain to represent the danger in the proper quarter before the next came round. But somehow with the return of the bright daylight, in the society of my fellows and the excitement and engrossment of my work, such thoughts melted away ; if they ever crossed my mind I'd call myself a fool and a coward, but as a rule I'd think no more of them till the next time. However, on that night I could not rest. I've heard people talk of presentiments, and to me there's nothing strange in them. Why should not some secret and sensitive part of our being detect and foresee danger, and do its best to warn the individual ? You may argue that some have never been conscious of such warnings. I answer that no two human beings are alike,

and that certain sensations affect individual temperaments to a degree of which others, differing from them in susceptibility or even in organization, have no idea whatever. Who dreams of denying that the pain which one man regards as a mere flea-bite is capable of conveying to another the most exquisite torture? I'm suggesting, not dogmatizing, here, remember. I hold that we know too little of these matters to dogmatize on them.

"Well, as I say, I felt strangely ill at ease. I had books, but I couldn't read them, letters to write home, but I couldn't give my mind to them ; and I spent most of the evening pacing up and down the length of my little cabin. It was a small place, twelve by nine feet or so, with the door and window at one end, and the fireplace at the other. Fireplace for me, thank ye ! I'd had enough of *braseros* down south and on my journeys, so I'd rigged up a grate that burnt splendidly, and the blazing knots of pine-wood hissed and sputtered there, throwing out a grand heat. On one side of the hearth was my bed, on the other my arm-chair. I never sat in front of the fire ; I never fancied turning my back on the door ; and my desk, chair, and the safe behind them occupied the corner directly opposite to it, giving me a full view of whoever entered, while Toro lay before the fire like a slumbering bullock. Now and then he'd cock one ear and listen in his dreams, as a weird howl from the forest sounded nearer than usual, but for the most part he lay motionless, toasting his huge side and snoring audibly. I've spanned that dog as he lay : he touched over six feet from nose to tail ; and when he stood up on his hind-legs he could put a paw on each of my shoulders and lick my face without stretching his neck.

" ' Dick Cameron, my lad, you're a fool and a nervous idiot,' I said to myself at last, finding that the unaccountable restlessness showed no signs of diminishing. ' Get to bed, you duffer, and sleep it off.' "

"No, my lad, I didn't fortify myself with brandy. I was no believer in Dutch courage at any time, and you take my word for it that if there's one man more than another who needs to keep his head clear and cool at his work, that man's a mining engineer. So, if you think that brandy or any other stimulant has to be taken into account as regards what I'm going to tell you, you never made a bigger mistake in your life. I looked to the fastening of the door, made up the fire, laid matches and the

brace of barkers close to my hand, patted and spoke to the dog, and threw myself on the bed, taking off nothing but my coat and hoping that the next thing of which I should be conscious would be morning looking in at the window. The key of the safe and one or two other valuables nothing ever induced me to part with, and I always carried 'em in a belt round my waist. My restlessness seemed to have communicated itself to Toro, for he refused to lie down, stalking round the room and sniffing in every corner, and at last, when he got tired of that, evincing a disposition to share my bed. On one occasion, when my stock of firewood had given out, and the frost had laid its icy fingers on me, he had lain at my back all night, and the heat of his huge frame had kept the life in me. But I didn't want him that time, so I kicked him off, ordering him to lie down, and he subsided on the hearth like a moderate-sized lion.

"I don't know what roused me, but I started suddenly wide awake. The fire lay a hot and glowing heap beyond the bars, by which I concluded that some hours had passed in the interval, and the shadows hung black and mysterious all round the place. For an instant I did not see the dog; then a low, savage growl drew my attention in the direction of the door. There he stood, his nose close to the foot of it, his huge tail waving backwards and forwards, every hair on his body on end with excitement, while he kept up *gurr-r gurr-r*, that fierce, deep monotone of a growl. I was on my feet in an instant, gripping with each hand at a revolver, just as my ears caught the faint sound of stealthy footsteps on the snow outside.

"Wolves! Yes, my lad, but the human ones! As I'm here, living before you, I tell you I could hear the low-toned voices without. In that one moment I had made up my mind what to do. Thank God, door and window were in close contact. Toro would keep the one—I could trust him for that—and I turned to guard the other. It was barred across, and could hold its own, and I swung round to drag the desk forward, intending to make that barricade the door still further. In that instant, as I turned, I saw that I was not alone. On the hearth, his back to the fire, stood the figure of a man.

"How or by what means he had entered, I know not, but he was there. The red glow of the fire outlined the tall figure, dark, motionless, and erect. For an instant, utterly taken by surprise,

I stood staring, forgetful, in my complete amazement, of the threatening danger without. Then remembrance came back, and I started forward. Had one of them, by some means of which I was ignorant, already forced his way in? At the same moment the fire, leaping into a sudden blaze, irradiated my visitant from head to foot . . . As I live, it was Alvaro Desmayo!

"The same as when I had last seen him, allowing for the difference that eight years had wrought on him by changing the lad into a man. He was wrapped in a long dark cloak, the upper part flung round his face so that the mouth was concealed—*embozado* is the word for what I mean—but all that I could see of him told me that he was Desmayo, and no other. I should have known his profile anywhere. I sprang forward, holding out an eager hand and calling him by name.

"He neither spoke nor stirred. I was going to say he did not look at me, only that I caught the gleam of his eyes fixed on me with a strange, mournful intensity, which yet had something repelling in it, and checked my advance, I hardly knew why. One would have thought that the frost had got into the cabin, for the air had grown suddenly cold, and the strange thing was that the icy chill seemed to emanate from the glowing fire.

"Till that moment I had forgotten Toro. But now, the fear strong on me that the great brute, savage as a lion with strangers, might spring on Desmayo unawares, I swung round, seized the animal by the collar, and turning his head in the direction of the fire, dragged him forward, pointing to the dark, shadowy figure and repeating: '*Amigo, Torito, amigo!*' I meant him to understand that the stranger was a friend.

"What did the dog do? I'll tell you. The great beast, capable of worrying the life out of a man as easily as I would kill a kitten, dropped his tail between his legs and rushed backwards, his eyes starting from his head, until the door brought him up short, and he sank to the floor, crouching and whining in mortal fear. Then, for the first time, the conviction that no mortal presence stood there came over me. The air of the cabin struck like death on my face and hands, my skin crept, and I felt the hair suddenly bristle on my scalp.

"Toro had dragged me back with him to the end of the place; his huge bulk lay against the heavy door, and I, beneath the window, could plainly hear the sounds from outside. The

stealthy, cat-like footsteps were close up to the shanty now ; only a few inches of plank lay between the threatening danger and myself. I could hear the voices, even distinguish a word or two, ominous in their significance : ‘ *The dog—alone—the window !* ’

“ They were evidently reconnoitring. I could hear the hard breathing now, then a scraping noise on the boards told me what they were about, and presently a face, ghastly in the uncertain light, showed at the window above my head, the eyes looking towards the further end where my bed stood. Opposite to the window, the outline of the dark figure thrown into strong relief against the lurid light beyond, stood that motionless visitant. The face disappeared, and through the planks came a low, scared whisper : ‘ *No está solo ; hay otro* ’ (‘ He is not alone ; there is another ’). Then an unbroken silence. Heaven knows how long we kept that awful vigil, the dog, myself, and that unknown presence by the fire. It lasted until a low murmur succeeded to the dead silence, and then the footsteps died away on the snow.

“ The morning light was pouring into the shanty, when I was roused by the dog licking my face, and lifted my head to find myself lying on the floor beneath the window, while my *capataz*, or foreman, just come up from the village, was hammering outside with all his might and shouting to me at the pitch of his voice to know if anything was wrong. He stared at me when I unbarred the door and let him in, declaring that I looked as if I had seen a spirit. I told him shortly that I had been pretty nearly made a spirit of, at any rate, and without more words sent him packing for the Civil Guards.

“ Yes, the blackguards were taken, and one of them, the owner of the face I had seen at the window, owned up candidly that their knowledge of the money in my charge had induced them to plan an attack on me by night, believing me to be alone. Needless to ask what had been their intentions with respect to me. Asked what had deterred them, he answered promptly, the finding that I had a companion. He had looked through the window, he himself, to ascertain that the señor—pointing to me—was asleep, and had seen another man, a stranger, standing with his back to the fire. It was not the Señor Cameron, whose features and appearance were perfectly well known to the speaker ; this had been one whom he did not recognise—a youth, tall and dark, shrouded and muffled in his *capa*. When I heard that, I

turned cold and sick. Until then, d'ye see, I had been clinging to the notion that it had been all a dream. I never spent another night in the shanty alone.

"Sequel, eh? Well, yes, there is a sequel. After that, I wrote straight off to a chum of mine at Rio Tinto, enjoining him to find out every detail relating to Alvaro Desmayo, and in particular to ascertain his whereabouts on the date I gave him. I knew before I opened his letter what the answer would be, and my surmise proved correct. As was proved by a careful comparing of time, Alvaro Desmayo had quitted this mortal life at the very moment when his spirit, as I must call it for want of knowing better, appeared to act as a safeguard to me in that lonely shanty on that never-to-be-forgotten night.

"What do I think of it? Well, a man prefers to keep that sort of experience, with his opinion on it, to himself, as a rule. But you gave me your views frankly enough on what you told me, so I'll be quits with you here. Whether the consciousness of his unfulfilled oath weighed on him, and he could not leave earth in peace, or whether, in some fuller knowledge coming to the disembodied spirit, the sense of my peril reached him, and he was permitted to linger before taking flight elsewhere to come to my help when I had sore need of him, He who has the keeping of us here and hereafter alone knows. That his likeness, his spirit, appeared to me, and by its presence saved me from being murdered in cold blood, I am as sure of as that I am living now. The rest must remain a mystery."

The Queen's Message

February 14th, 1896.

O SOVEREIGN brow of England's Majesty
Engirt with sorrow's crown ! What timeless frost
Of war's dread feet with sudden chill has crossed
The sunshine of thy home ? So fade and die
Life's flowers and glories, like a passing sigh ;
And thou, our Queen, must yield the bitter cost,
The priceless harvest of thy dearest, lost,
To the vast garner of eternity.

Ay, thou canst feel the touch of heavenly balm
Through hearts that break, like thine, above the dust
Of earth to earth resigned, God's tender trust
For all that live, for thee and for thy child,
True to the last, by faith assured and calm,
Through quenchless hope of all things reconciled.

EMILIA AYLMER GOWING.

Crossed at Right Angles.

A STORY

By S. J. DOUGLAS

CHAPTER V.

NOW, do you all know your parts?" inquired Lady Fanny. The company had assembled for a first rehearsal in the large hall where the performance was to take place. Little Mr. Basil Traill, who had once taken a small part in a real play at a real live theatre, was stage-manager. He stood beside Lady Fanny and nervously ruffled the leaves of his play-book, and glanced through his pince-nez at the actors, who were laughing and talking together in a very unbusinesslike style. He wished he dared call them to order, but they were all bigger men than himself.

"I think we ought to begin," he said feebly.

"Yes," said Lady Fanny in brisk tones, "we certainly ought to begin. Gervase! Bertie! Mr. Stokes! Captain Taylor! Will you stop talking and attend to business? Captain Taylor, if you go on laughing in that ridiculous way I'll send you home. What is the joke?"

"I'll tell you," said the captain. He mounted the steps on to the stage and drew her aside to whisper into her ear. The story took so long to tell that the stage-manager was in despair. He sat down at a little table L.C. and pretended to be busy making notes in his play-book.

"Are you two rehearsing your parts?" called out Miss Lacy to Gervase and Gertrude, who were seated side by side on a bench in the audience. There was, perhaps, a touch of malice in her tone, for the stage was bare and draughty, and she was cold and impatient to begin rehearsal. She did not "see the fun of messin' about like a pack of idiots at a tea-fight when time was passin', and there was a draught fit to cut you in two coming from goodness knew where."

"That attitude would do nicely for the garden scene when I interrupt you," she went on, as no notice was taken of her first remark. "I might come up behind and crack your heads together, like a couple of cocoanuts."

Gervase and Gertrude moved a little further apart, though in reality they were not closer together than they need have been.

"Will you hear me say that long speech?" said Gervase, not without some trepidation, for he had found that Miss Aylmer's manner was far from inviting too rapid strides in the advance of acquaintance.

She took the book in silence, and he stumbled through the speech rather lamely, like a schoolboy repeating a lesson.

"I say, Gervase," said Bertie Herries, clambering over the backs of the benches towards them, "this doesn't look much like a performance on Thursday, does it? Why doesn't that young ass, Traill, begin and do something or other? I don't believe he knows any more about acting than I do."

"These theatricals are a beastly nuisance," said Gervase crossly as he left his seat. He was surprised and annoyed to find that his efforts to make friends with Gertrude met with scant response. He could not understand it. She talked naturally and gaily to the other men, but to him she assumed a manner which seemed to relegate him to the North Pole. He could make no headway at all, but if Gertrude had deliberately schemed to attract him, she could not have chosen a surer method to insure his perseverance.

"Now then, look here, we must begin," said Lady Fanny, suddenly awakening to a sense of her responsibility and advancing to the front. "Mr. Traill, should not all the actors come behind the scenes to begin with? We shall never get on at this rate."

"I quite agree with you, Lady Fanny," said Mr. Traill. "It will be impossible to do anything at all unless some kind of order is observed."

He flapped his book fiercely in his hand and glared through his glasses at Bertie Herries and young Stokes, who were hugely enjoying some private joke of their own. He was a meek little man, but a worm will turn, and acting was his particular hobby. He considered it the finest of fine arts, and it angered him that these great wooden-headed fellows should treat it so lightly. He would have liked to have hurled abuse at them, if his courage had been equal to the burning eloquence pent up in his breast.

"I think Mr. Herries and Mr. Stokes are on first," he said stiffly.

"Yes, of course," said Lady Fanny briskly. "Bertie! Mr. Stokes! Will you begin when you are told, and not keep us all waiting like this?"

The rehearsal began and proceeded as lamely as only a first amateur rehearsal can, with many interruptions and perpetual asseverations from the actors that they "really couldn't act up just now."

"I can never act, you know, unless I'm dressed up and made up," said Bertie confidentially to Agnes as he returned to his seat beside her with a satisfied air, after he had been pushed and prompted through his first scene. He had only to say a few sentences, but he never said them without mistakes and blunders innumerable.

"I think it's the most awful thing one can be asked to do," said Agnes, who was pale from genuine fright. "I've never acted before, and I'll never act again if I can help it. I shall have to be pushed or pulled through my part on Thursday night, but I shall be half fainting with terror, I know I shall."

"Well, if you don't forget your part it will be all right," said Bertha Lacy, who was waiting for her cue to go on as an "Old Woman," a part in which she excelled. "Only don't do as a friend of mine once did when he was acting Queen Elizabeth in some college theatricals. At the most critical moment he forgot what he had to say. He was sitting on his throne, and every one was standing round waiting for him. There was an awful pause. He had to say something. So he looked round, pulled himself together, and said majestically, 'Gentlemen, your queen is thirsty.'"

"By Jove!" said Bertie excitedly. "Do you think I might bring that into my part? It would be sure to make the audience simply roar with laughter."

He went off to consult the stage-manager.

"You are never nervous, Gertrude, are you?" said Agnes, making room for her friend beside her.

"Not very," said Gertrude. "I am nervous beforehand sometimes, but seldom at the time. I try to forget myself in my part."

"I wonder how you and Gervase will get on," said Agnes. "I believe you don't like Gervase, Gertrude," she added after a pause.

Gertrude flushed crimson.

"Why should you think so?" she said in a constrained manner.

"Oh, I am sure you think he is stuck up and conceited," Agnes said innocently. "But, you know, he is not a bit, really. It's only his manner. People often think he gives himself airs, but he doesn't mean to."

"I think he is very nice," murmured Gertrude.

"I am glad you think so," replied Agnes earnestly, "because, you know, he really *is* nice. He is a cousin of mine—rather distant—but I have known him ever since we were children. Girls often tell me he is so difficult to get on with, and has so little to say," went on Agnes, "and I suppose you found that last night at dinner, for I noticed you hardly spoke to each other. But he really can talk about plenty of things if he likes, not only sport—though he is devoted to that—but books and politics, and these kinds of things. He is really clever and well read, mother says."

"I must try him with politics," said Gertrude with a smile.

There came a call for Agnes, and Gertrude was left to ask herself sarcastically if she disliked Gervase Delvin or if she was only in danger of liking him too well. She thought of what she had written in that hysterical document, her diary, the night before:

"I am afraid of myself. I have met a man who is the very living embodiment of the ideal I have always set up in my heart of what a man ought to be: tall and fair, physically perfect, a gentleman from the crown of his head to the toes of his boots, clever, interesting, strong-willed, a manly, masterful man, with nothing effeminate in his tastes or his manners. I think he likes me. One can always tell when a man is attracted by one, but I feel stiff, and shy, and awkward. I wonder if he thinks me very dull and stupid. I have heard that he is to marry Agnes. Happy Agnes! Oh, why can I not marry a man like that? Oh, what a fool I am! I shall fall head over heels in love with him if I don't take care; that would be a senseless proceeding, deliberately bringing trouble and sorrow on myself. No, I will avoid him. He will soon give up trying to befriend me."

These thoughts returned to her as she sat in the hall, her eyes staring before her at the benches and chairs, but seeing only a troubled vision of herself weeping over a broken heart if she permitted herself to flirt with Gervase.

She looked at him furtively as he went through his part on the stage, and the image of another figure flashed across her mind's eye—a sturdy, stunted figure in country-made clothes, with big hands and feet and a homely, honest countenance. He did not contrast well with the man on the stage.

Gertrude suddenly experienced a wild desire to “let herself go,” to turn down the flowery path of flirtation that opened so invitingly before her, to meet the advances of this all too fascinating man and let prudence take care of itself. Was she to go through life with no more exciting admirer than George Allison, no sweeter passion than the sober affection on which a marriage with him would be based?

There was no question of anything more important than a mere week's amusement, a mere flirtation with this other man who had crossed her path. If one handles sharp-edged tools with care, they will not injure one.

“Miss Aylmer! Miss Aylmer!” came the call from the stage, and startled her out of her abstraction.

The rehearsal had been stumbling along without life or spirit, the actors self-conscious and with no very firm grasp of their words, but with Gertrude's presence it became a different affair. She was a born actress, naturally graceful and magnetic, with a well-modulated voice, and she had taken trouble to study every word and gesture of her part, which was a good one, and gave her some scope for exhibiting her talent.

Silence fell over the frivolous group of amateurs as they watched her. Mr. Traill beamed; Lady Fanny ceased whispering to Captain Taylor; Agnes's eyes dilated; Miss Lacy kept her tortoiseshell eyeglass glued firmly to her nose; even the men who had been lounging carelessly in the green-room came to the wings and stood with their cigarettes suspended while they watched. Gervase rose gallantly to the occasion. Gertrude's complete self-possession and absorption in her part carried him away, and when their first scene together was over, there was a burst of applause from the other actors.

“If you act like that on the night,” said Lady Fanny, jumping down from the table on which she had perched herself, “it will be a tremendous success. Now let's go to luncheon, and leave the next scene till afterwards.”

The servants had prepared a picnic on the long table in the

green-room. The actors hungrily took their places round it, while a buzz of talk and laughter suddenly loosened their tongues, the voice of Bertha Lacy's sounding through all as the steady clack-clack of machinery.

Gertrude took a seat at the end of the table, and when Gervase wished to sit down, the only vacant place was beside her. He was nothing loath to take it.

"You ought to go on the stage, Miss Aylmer," he said, when he had supplied her and himself with food.

"I have often thought of it," she said, "but my father will not hear of it."

"Well, he is quite right," said Gervase. "The stage is no place for a lady, though it has improved vastly of late years, and there are many really nice people in the profession."

"Yes, indeed," said Gertrude. "Some of the cleverest men and women of the day take it up now. And it is certainly a noble art—one of the noblest."

"Yes, I don't dispute that," said Gervase, "but, all the same, I should not like to see any of my sisters or friends on the stage. When you're at the top of the tree, you're all right, but there's a lot of grinding and struggling and disagreeables of all sorts to be gone through first, such as no lady delicately nurtured and brought up as *you* have been, for instance, could stand."

"I could stand it," said Gertrude. "I should not mind what drudgery and discomfort had to be gone through as long as I got on well. I would rather work hard with a goal in view, than do nothing all my days."

He looked at her in some surprise. She spoke bitterly.

"It seems a very great pity such talent as yours should be wasted," he said, "but if a woman has a comfortable home, I think she should be very careful not to abandon it in a hurry to follow a doubtful and struggling career. Don't you agree with me, or are you one of these New Women who think that woman's sphere is everywhere?"

"I am not a New Woman," said Gertrude laughing; "and I don't know any one who is. But I confess I often long to see a little more of the world and have some definite work to do. A girl's life in the country is a very narrow one, you know. If it wasn't for books, I don't know how one could live. And even books only give you human nature at secondhand."

"But surely you can study human nature in the country," said Gervase.

"Oh, of course," said Gertrude. "There's abundance of life in a stagnant pond, but if the study of weeds and little animals doesn't interest you, you want to go further afield, don't you?"

"Where you only find more weeds and little animals, after all," he replied.

Gertrude laughed.

"You are a philosopher, I see," she said.

Gervase laughed too, and suddenly recognized that they had become very good friends.

"I am no actor," he said presently, "but I felt quite inspired when I was acting with you. You were so completely transformed into Kate, that I began to feel I was Raymond."

"You were very good," said Gertrude, returning the compliment. "Last time I acted in this piece I had a dreadfully stupid Raymond, a regular stick, who could not even remember his words."

"I will at least try to do that," said Gervase, "and if you can give me any little hints about my acting, I shall be proud to do my best to follow them."

"Well," said Gertrude, with a shade of teasing in her expressive voice, "don't you think that when I made that long speech about our acquaintance in old days you should stand? Men were more chivalrous in those days than they are now, and I think Raymond would not have sat still to listen to such words."

"No, I daresay not," he said quickly, "but I object when you say that men are less chivalrous nowadays than they were then. We are just as chivalrous, if you ladies will only allow us to be so."

"Allow you!" said Gertrude. "Have you ever met any one who objected?"

"Yes," he said firmly, "I have. Sometimes I have done my best to make myself agreeable to a lady, and she has only repaid me by cold looks and monosyllables and given me clearly to understand that I bored her to death."

Gertrude laughed merrily and looked up into his face.

"You needn't laugh," he said, returning her glance with interest. "I am most ready to pay homage to a lady, if she is willing to receive it, but I am a shy man and very easily discouraged."

"In other words, you don't trouble yourself much, if there is

some one else to take your place who is not so easily discouraged," said Gertrude, not thinking much of what she was saying.

"No," said Gervase, helping himself to a glass of sherry and speaking very deliberately. "I hope I am polite to all ladies, but I confess it is not often I meet one who excites my — chivalry, if that's what you call it, to any extraordinary degree."

"But it does happen?"

He looked at her solemnly. Her eyes were fixed demurely on the table-cloth, and there was a provoking smile twitching in the corners of her mouth.

"You don't believe me," he said, leaning sideways on his elbow, with his glass in the other hand; "but I assure you I have a heart, Miss Aylmer, not a very impressionable one, perhaps, but it is here."

"Cracked and chipped, but still in your own possession," she said sarcastically.

"No, quite whole, without a chip or a crack," he replied gravely.

"Then it must be very hard," she said.

"Perhaps it is; like marble, a beautiful material, which requires a very hard blow to break it."

"Or a very skilful sculptor to make anything of it," said Gertrude.

"Yes, just so," said Gervase. "None of the sculptors or sculptresses I have met yet are skilful enough. What talent have you in that line, Miss Aylmer?"

"If I have any 'talent in that line,' as you call it," said Gertrude, "I have not brought it with me here, and should not use it if I had."

"That's one for me," said Gervase, greatly amused. "Do you know you are very severe, Miss Aylmer? I never met any one who frightened me as much as you do."

"You must be easily frightened," she said coldly, for his bantering tone annoyed her.

"Yes, I am," he said, watching the colour coming into her cheeks. "I am so timid, that it's a shame to trample on me as if I were a door-mat."

"Oh, for goodness' sake, don't talk nonsense," said Gertrude, with sudden heat; "I do hate it so. Why can't you talk sensibly?" She did not give him time to answer, but rose from

her chair, and joined the others, who were moving into the theatre again.

"Well, I never!" he ejaculated, laughing inwardly as he looked after her and picked up her chair, which had fallen over backwards. Then he lit a cigarette and followed her, wondering how he could bring that delightful flash into her eyes again; but the angry light had quite died out when he found himself alone beside her again.

"I am afraid I was rude just now," said she, "but I hate to be laughed at."

"I wasn't laughing," he protested.

"It looked uncommonly like it," she replied.

"Well, I won't do it any more," he said as he sat down beside her. "Do you mind smoke?"

"Yes, I am afraid I do," said Gertrude, "if it comes in my face."

He threw his cigarette on the floor, and set his heel on it.

"Oh," said Gertrude in distress, "how could you? I never dreamt you would do that, or I wouldn't have said it."

"Never mind," said Gervase. "You said you didn't believe men were chivalrous, you know."

"Please light another at once," said Gertrude. "I can go and sit somewhere else, if I don't like it."

A great noise was going on in the great echoing hall. Bertie Herries and young Stokes and the other men were steeplechasing like schoolboys over the forms and benches, cheered on and applauded by the ladies.

"No, don't do that," said Gervase. "I will go if you want me to. Was that why you said you disliked smoke?"

"Yes," said Gertrude, examining the toes of her boots, with a mischievous smile.

Gervase threw back his head and laughed.

"Really, Miss Aylmer! It's impossible to know what you mean. If you really meant that, you wouldn't have said it, but I should have believed it. Now what do you want me to do?"

"Light a cigarette at once," she said.

"And leave you?"

"Just as you please."

"Supposing I would rather stay here without the cigarette?"

"You must have the cigarette, at any rate," she said. "Please do light one quickly."

"Then you may stay here if I go to the other side, when you won't get it in your face," he said, putting his hand into his pocket.

"Yes, that will do," she said, blushing slightly. "What a fuss about nothing!" she added as she watched him strike a match and shelter it in his hands, while he lit a fresh cigarette.

"One can't have anything worth having without a fuss," he said as he threw away the match and put the box into his pocket. "By Jove! look at those fellows! How hot they are making themselves."

CHAPTER VI.

LITTLE Mr. Traill was in despair, for a hard frost had set in, the lake was bearing, and the theatrical company chose to sport on the ice from morning to night. One and all, the actors and actresses ignored his pressing appeals for rehearsal, and treated his gloomy prognostications that the performance would be a dead failure with nonchalance. A faint sense of duty prompted Lady Fanny to order a rehearsal one morning, but it was such a perfunctory affair, that it was worse than useless.

"Never mind," Lady Fanny said cheerfully when the company had escaped with undisguised sighs of relief; "we must leave it till the evening. We will rehearse hard after dinner."

"H'm! I know what that means," grumbled Mr. Traill. "After dinner every one will be dead tired, and there will be no dragging them out of their armchairs. Well, I'm sure I don't care!"

On the lake, the scene resembled a picture on a frosted Christmas card. The old house, as large and straggling as a small village, with clustered gables and roofs, and chimney-stacks, and many-mullioned windows, was warmly clothed in a thick dark green coat of ivy, but every sloping expanse of roof was smoothly covered with a fresh layer of snow, while every window-sill, every jutting stone cornice, every place where the snow could lie, had a sparkling white edge. The lawns and terraces which led by steep gradations down to the lake showed a smooth, spotless white surface, and each stone vase and statue and clipped yew tree had its neat layer of snow. The trees were rapidly losing

their frosting of rime in the warm sunshine, and were pencilled in purplish black against a pure pale blue sky ; only the fir trees, which inclosed one side of the lake, retained a light load of snow on each spreading green branch.

The ice had been swept and flooded, and appeared blacker for the banks of snow piled round the edge. Brightly clad, rosy-cheeked figures darted to and fro on its surface, breaking the crisp, frosty silence with their gay voices.

At one end, the curling stones rumbled up and down the rinks, with the melodious sound dear to Scotch ears, followed by the frenzied shouts of the players, who capered and vociferated in their excitement as if their very lives depended on the fortunes of the game. No curler was more interested in his game, "skipt" more cannily, or was more carried away by enthusiasm than Mr. Adare. His voice was constantly heard, hoarse with shouting directions in unnaturally broad accents and expressing alternately triumph and despair in the varied fortunes of the match.

At the other end of the wide lake the party from the house played hockey, and scurried backwards and forwards, and shrieked and laughed and collided and shrieked again in pure fun and in the mere joy of being young and full of tingling vitality on such a glorious morning. Their numbers were swelled by the arrival of people from several neighbouring houses, and as the cook peeped from her kitchen window, and the butler from his pantry, they groaned as they perceived what an enormous luncheon must be prepared.

But little recked the hockey-players of aught but their own enjoyment. Gertrude, for one, thought she had never been happier in her life than on this occasion, when the sun shone, the ice was keen, faces were rosy with exercise and beaming with good humour. She was a quick and nimble skater, but not as good as Lady Fanny, who was as indefatigable as a swallow.

Gervase undertook to teach Gertrude the outside edge. "You would soon learn it," he said as he performed marvellous feats on the outside edge for her benefit. He was constantly by her side ; he could not keep away from her. He admired the brilliant colour in her cheeks and her scarlet "Tam-o'-Shanter," which showed off her black hair, with its silky ripples and little dusky curls behind her ears. Every trace of stiffness had vanished from her manner. She laughed and talked and darted

to and fro like a child, and her dark eyes lit up mischievously when they met his.

Agnes was the only person on the lake who did not enjoy herself. She was a very unskilful skater ; her ankles ached till she could have cried with the pain ; her feet were cold ; her nose was red ; she fell down when she attempted to play hockey.

"Aren't you skating, Miss Belton?" said Basil Traill when he arrived and found her standing forlornly near the bank.

"I've got my skates on," she replied in a dismal tone of voice, "but that's all."

"I have never had a pair of skates on in my life," he said, sitting down cheerfully to put them on. "I feel rather timid, but it looks so jolly, I must try."

Agnes looked at him respectfully. Did he know what he was in for? Surely he would not be so innocently cheerful if he suspected the miseries, the uncertainties, the dangers, of the first day on skates.

"There," he said, fastening the last strap, "now I am ready."

He floundered on and struck out boldly, only to fall heavily on his back at the third stroke.

"Dear me! it's not so easy as I thought," he said as he picked himself up. "Never mind ; try again." And on he went again, cheerfully and hopefully. Agnes forgot her own troubles as she watched him. He was so bold, he struck out so wildly, he floundered and lurched and scratched and saved himself from falling with such frantic exertions, with such flapping arms and uncontrollable legs, and in spite of all persevered so bravely, that she respected his courage and determination, though she could not help laughing at his antics. It comforted her, too, to find some one was as bad as herself, and through adversity they were drawn together, and before the morning was over were able to scratch slowly hand in hand round the pond, with many lurches and long pauses to rest their aching legs.

"Well done, you two! You are getting on famously," said Gervase as chance brought him near them at one time. He had felt some compunction when he saw Agnes, forlorn and cold, apart from the rest. He had put on her refractory skate twice, and had given her a hand round the pond two or three times, but her awkwardness had been too high a trial for his patience. He could not be expected to curb his long, strong strides and

dawdle by her side, growing cold, when he was impatient to take his place at hockey and outskate the swiftest of the swift. Later on, when the hockey was over, and the afternoon began to close in, he was not sorry to see that she had returned to the house. Her innocent, candid eyes annoyed him, though he told himself she had no cause to be jealous of Gertrude. Gertrude amused and fascinated him, but he was not going to fall in love with her. Oh dear no, neither he nor Gertrude had the slightest idea of such a thing, only it was very pleasant to "pretend," as the children say.

When the shadows began to fall, and the sun, like a huge burnished copper disc, had set behind the trees, four bonfires were lit at each corner of the lake. Their red flames made centres of flaring orange-coloured light in the dusk, and the lower branches of the surrounding trees were plunged into profound gloom. Their tops were faintly seen against the grey sky, which rapidly grew darker. The terraces, in their mantle of snow, seemed remote and silent. Square patches of light showed where the house stood, its chimneys faintly seen against the fainter sky.

The skaters darted in and out of the light and shadow, now in the ruddy glow of the fires, now lost in the black shadow whence only their voices and the ring of their skates were heard.

It grew darker and darker, but no one thought of returning to the house.

The clouds cleared away from a deep indigo sky, and one by one the stars appeared till the whole heaven was strewn with them. The Milky Way stretched luminously overhead, Orion pranced in the west, Sirius blazed further south, Aldebaran shone like a jewel, and the silver "fireflies" of the Pleiades were distinctly visible.

It was freezing hard, and the skates rang out clearly as they cut over the glassy ice. The skaters were warm and indefatigable. The keen air invigorated them; their feet seemed shod with wings; they flew faster in the dark than in the daytime. Rugs and chairs were placed round the fires, but it was not possible to sit still for long, even close to the blaze, for it was freezing hard.

"Are you never coming in, Fanny?" said Mr. Adare, who did not skate, and had come down from the house in goloshes, to see if there was any prospect of dinner that night.

"Oh, not yet," said Lady Fanny, throwing herself into a chair with a great sigh of enjoyment. "Oh, it's heavenly!" she added. She was a very swift and skilful skater, and could skim and dart over the ice backwards and forwards, twisting, turning, swaying, as easily as if she were dancing. There was no figure she could not cut on outside or inside edge, and floating over the ice as gracefully as a feather blown by the wind.

Captain Taylor had been in Canada, and was the only one of the men worthy to skate with her, which was a very good reason that he should do so all day long.

Her husband looked on proudly as they waltzed together.

"Don't we do it well, Miles?" she said, coming up to him with a rush and swinging round on his arm. "Captain Taylor is divine. It's like riding on the clouds to skate with him. Come on, Captain Taylor; teach me that new figure. Look, Miles, we begin like this: he puts his arm round my waist, and I give him my other hand so, and then we go backwards like this; then he swings me forward, and I turn on the outside edge and find his other arm ready on the other side—so. Isn't it pretty!"

She swung off into the darkness again, and her husband watched her lovingly.

He did not care whom she waltzed or skated with when she could look in his face with eyes as innocent as those of her own children.

"Daddy, daddy," these same children shouted, seizing him by both hands, "give us a slide; give us a slide."

They had been allowed to come down to see the bonfires, and looked like two round balls in their woolly winter coats, with fur caps on their heads and gaiters on their stout legs.

"Daddy, daddy," they shouted, each pulling a coat-tail, "*do* give us a slide; *do* give us a slide."

"Hold on, then!" said the good-natured parent, and when his offspring had firmly attached themselves to his coat-tails, he started off at a run, and dragged them, squealing with delight, at his heels.

"Again! again!" they shouted when he paused, and again and again he slid to and fro, until suddenly Seraph's feet slipped up and fled from under her, and Cherub fell heavily, with a bump on the back of her golden head, so that the pastime was brought to an untimely close.

"Hadn't you better go in now?" suggested their father when he had set them on their legs again and wiped their faces with his handkerchief.

"No, no," they said with determination. They kept their faces turned steadily away from the bank, where their nurse stood beckoning vainly as if she were a hen with ducklings. They turned their backs on their father and left him, with an air of dignity, as if to disarm any intention he might have of enforcing his proposal.

On the other side of the fire they found their uncle Gervase and Kate, as they called Gertrude, after her name in the play. They were sitting on two chairs, close together, and between them was a hamper of potatoes, which they were roasting in a glowing cavern, like a jewelled palace in a fairy tale. Each was trying to eat a smoking-hot potato and pretending to like it.

"Give us some! give us some!" clamoured the children, swarming on to their uncle's knee before he knew where he was.

"Bother you brats!" he said as Seraph nearly annihilated him in a woolly embrace.

"You may have mine!" said Gertrude, proffering her half-eaten potato.

"That's what I call base ingratitude," said Gervase. "Seraph, don't you touch that potato! I cooked it myself for Kate, and she is not to give it away."

"Oh, do let me off, please," said Gertrude. "I am not hungry."

"You said just now you were."

"Oh, I don't always say what I mean," said Gertrude. "I thought you had found that out."

"Seraph," said Gervase, speaking to the child, who had seized the proffered potato and was munching it on his knee, "you mustn't ever believe what Kate says. She says she never speaks the truth. Tell her what is done to people who don't speak the truth."

"Don't trouble, Seraph," said Gertrude quickly. "I see your mouth is full. Don't try to speak."

"I told a story once," said Seraph, in spite of her mouthful of potato. "I said I had eaten *one* sweetie, and I had eaten twenty or a hundred. The bag was empty. Mamma put a bit of paper with 'Story-teller' on my back. Only somehow it got tore up when I rolled on the floor."

"You see what a fate awaits those who tell stories," said Gervase to Gertrude.

"You ought to have a placard on your back," she retorted.

"And what would you write on it, pray?" he asked.

"Humbug!" she replied viciously. There was a pause. She spoke in a tone so different from her previous gay one that he looked at her in surprise, puzzled to account for the sudden change. The firelight played on her profile, and it had a hard expression. He felt distinctly annoyed.

"And why, please?" he said coldly.

"Because you deserve the name, of course," she said.

"I daresay, but I should like very much to know how you have arrived at the conclusion, if you don't mind telling me," he said.

She regretted her accusation, and tried to turn it off with a laugh.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she said, moving restlessly back from the fire; "I only meant it in fun. I didn't know you would take it seriously."

"You didn't say it in fun, Miss Aylmer. Yes, children, run off when you're called. It's high time you were in bed. There, there, I don't want any more of your damp kisses."

When the children had gone, he drew his chair nearer to hers, and said, "Now, Miss Aylmer, please, we must have this out."

She leant back in her chair and gazed into the glowing, jewelled-wall cavern of the fire with a troubled look.

"I am sorry I said anything to offend you," she said.

"If you really are sorry, you will tell me why you accused me of being a humbug," he said.

She was silent.

"I hate shams and affectations of any kind with such a peculiar hatred," he went on, "that you touch me on a sore point when you accuse me of being a humbug."

"I did not mean it in a bad sense," she said.

"I am glad to hear it, and I should be still better pleased if I could make you believe that I am not a humbug in any sense of the word."

She did not reply, and they were silent for some minutes. He had no greater desire at the moment than to make her believe that he was no common, shallow-pated flirt, no puppy-dog

ready to leap at every lady's dangling apron-string. He was ridiculously anxious that she should believe that he was capable of deep feeling, of faith and constancy and true, steadfast devotion.

"I am very sorry that you should have formed such a low opinion of my character," he said after a pause.

"That surely need not trouble you much," she replied.

"It does trouble me, Miss Aylmer."

"I don't know why it should," she said with sudden impatience. "You need not take so much trouble to clear yourself in my eyes. If you were a humbug, it wouldn't matter to me. I am not blind, and can look things squarely in the face and take them for what they are worth, I assure you."

A great log in the fire fell with a crash and destroyed the fairy cavern. A shower of golden sparks burst upwards; then the steady flame began in a new place. Sirius hung like a lamp over the tip of a dark fir tree.

The other skaters were grouped round the second fire, and their voices and laughter might have been heard for miles around in the still cold air. Gervase leant forward, and laid his hand on the arm of her chair.

"On my honour, Miss Aylmer," he said earnestly, "I am not a humbug, least of all—just now—to you."

"Very well, then," said Gertrude, pushing back her chair. 'Let us go and skate. I humbly apologize for my accusation, and I crave your forgiveness."

"No, that is not the way to put it," he said. "I ought to have apologized for bothering you."

"Oh, you haven't wounded me very deeply," she said gaily.

"Very well. We agree to be friends again, don't we?" he said, offering his hand.

"Yes, for the present," she said, looking up at him with a smile, as they swung off at a brisk pace.

"I think quarrelling is rather fun," said Gervase when they were half-way round, passing through the deep shadow of the fir trees.

"It depends whom you quarrel with," replied Gertrude.

(To be continued.)

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A Modern Comedy of Errors.

By DARLEY DALE,

Author of "THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH," "THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT," etc.

"I was ta'en for him and he for me,
And thereupon these errors are arose."—

Comedy of Errors.

CHAPTER XIV.

PAUL IS POSSESSED.

MR. DURSLEY'S letter to Sir Peter crossed with one from him, telling Paul of the visit of Bertha and Chloe to Eastwich Castle, and inclosing the letter he had received from Dorothy. Sir Peter appeared to be in fairly good spirits, and was working so hard at his book that the time did not seem long to him, and he appeared to be looking forward to the visit of Chloe on the following Friday.

Of course it was Chloe he wanted to see again ; it never for one moment occurred to Paul to think it could be Bertha, and a great wave of jealousy rose up in his heart. It was hard enough to know that Peter had had the felicity of seeing Chloe, while he (Paul) was denied that joy ; but that Sir Peter should have taken advantage of his position to flirt with her, as Mr. Dursley chose to consider he had done, was beyond all bearing.

"I'll pay old Peter out for this as sure as I am Paul ; I would a thousand times rather finish my time in prison than run the risk of Peter and Chloe falling in love with each other. That's a complication by no means to be desired, moreover the game we are playing is far too dangerous ; I have had enough of it. I shall go down to Eastwich on Friday morning so as to be in time to see Chloe and send Peter back here. I'll telegraph that I am coming on Friday."

Here he was interrupted by the entrance of Drummond, looking annoyed and mysterious as he advanced close to his master's chair.

"It is that Mrs. Halkett, the widow lady, sir. Shall I say you are engaged?"

"No, show her in, and just send this telegram off at once."

"Certainly, Sir Peter, and there is a French gentleman waiting; what am I to do with him? Shall I send him to Dr. Philippe, where you sent the last French lady?"

"No, show Mrs. Halkett in first, and then I'll see the French gentleman," said Paul.

Now Sir Peter did not speak French, as both Drummond and Mr. Dursley knew, but the latter was in a devil-may-care mood that day and determined to have some sport.

Sir Peter should not poach on his preserves with impunity, and all the while poor Sir Peter was quite innocent of any such desire.

"Mrs. Halkett," said Drummond, as that lady advanced towards Paul, with a very languid air and a plaintive, beseeching expression in the eyes she raised to his.

"And how is Mrs. Halkett to-day?"

"Very suffering, Sir Peter; I have lost all interest in life; generally a visit to you is like a new lease of life to me, but I have been worse since I saw you last."

"How was that?" said Dursley, taking her wrist in one of his hands, and holding it much longer than was necessary for any professional purpose.

"I don't know. I assure you, Sir Peter, I have really striven against this feeling of loneliness and depression; you seemed to think I gave way to it, and that rather hurt me;" and she looked reproachfully at him as she seated herself with her back to the light.

Sir Peter would have asked her to move so that he might scrutinize her professionally, but Paul was more merciful.

"You are very sensitive, and we men are brutes very often, aren't we? Let me see, Mrs. Halkett, you came to see me last about three weeks ago. Ah! yes; here it is," said Dursley, turning up the case in Sir Peter's book, and reading, among other items, "A dangerous woman; beware of her," in Latin, written no doubt for his instruction and learning.

“Well, now, tell me what you have been doing since I last saw you,” said Paul, leaning towards her and infusing profound sympathy and interest into his voice and manner.

“Briefly, regretting the past and dreading the future, its uncertainty, its loneliness, its terrible contrast to what might have been. Ah! Sir Peter, you know it all as well as I do, but then you have your career, and your darling children to help to fill up the void. I am childless, as you know, and I have no object in life and I am such a silly weak woman. I miss the strength and support of my husband’s love more than most women would do!” and here a handkerchief was brought into play and dexterously applied to her eyes without removing any of the pencilling beneath them.

“I wonder how she does it,” thought Paul, as he watched her keenly, and answered :

“I know, I quite understand, but you must not despair, you must hope ; for aught you can tell the future may have better things in store for you than even the past had. These fits of depression are very natural, even if they are a little foolish. How is your appetite ? ”

“Wretched ; I can’t eat alone.”

“Let me see ; am I not going to dine with you one night this week ? I forget which.”

“No, you declined, and I thought it just a little unkind, though of course you have so many engagements, and I have so little to offer you except good cooking ; that I can answer for.”

“But there is some mistake ; I am sure I am engaged to dine with you one evening this week, and I have every intention of coming if you will have me. Surely my secretary can’t have made a mistake. What day was it to be ? ”

“Thursday.”

“Thursday ! oh, it is all right ; I am not engaged for Thursday evening. I am full up for the rest of the week, though.”

“Then you’ll come on Thursday ? ”

“With pleasure if you’ll have me ; but really I must speak to Coleman about this ; I can’t have it happen again. Well, now, I shan’t give you a prescription to-day, consequently I shan’t take a fee ; but come and see me again next week here, and I’ll be with you at eight on Thursday. It is eight, isn’t it ? ”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Halkett, taking the hint, and rising to go, and

returning faintly the very decided pressure Paul gave her hand as he walked to the door with it in his.

When Drummond threw open the door to admit the French gentleman Paul was in his easy-chair stifling a fit of laughter; he sprung up and composed his features in time to receive the Baron de Morlaix.

The baron was enchanted to find a doctor who spoke his language so fluently as Paul, and after complimenting him on it, said he should have the greatest pleasure in sending some of his compatriots to the great Sir Peter; to which Paul replied he rarely saw French patients; he was so very busy that he usually sent them on to a French friend close by.

"I must not get Sir Peter into too much of a fix after all; my new friend, Monsieur le Baron, is sure to call upon him very soon," thought Paul, as the baron departed, and Drummond appeared to say the next patient had been several times within the last year.

"Wait a moment; what's the name?"

"Mrs. Bowen, sir."

"All right," said Paul, as he looked up the name and put himself in possession of the leading facts of the case before the patient was shown in, when he assumed Sir Peter's grave manner, and got through the interview without raising any suspicion in Mrs. Bowen's mind.

The next patient was a maiden lady, who in her anxiety to observe proprieties, came with her sister, and put Paul for the moment into a fix, for he had no idea which was the patient, and they were so unlike in face and figure that he could not pretend to mistake one for the other.

He solved the difficulty by saying when they were both seated:

"Well, and how is my patient?"

To his relief one replied that she was better, a statement her sister gently disputed, and when the interview was over, the invalid retired, and Paul had to break to the other, in answer to her urgent inquiries, that there was very little if any hope of her recovery. They were evidently devotedly attached to each other, and the look of intense sorrow on the younger one's face, as she listened and remarked she must not let the invalid suspect there was any danger, and then went out forcing a smile to cover her broken heart—that look and that smile haunted Mr. Dursley for the rest of the morning.

"Prison is dull, no doubt, but this sort of scene takes it out of me more than I expect prison will. I am not surprised that Peter is relieved to get away from it," he thought as the next patient—a stranger—was shown in.

"There is one thing I don't mean to do, and that is run any more risks by dining out with strangers; so I shall send an excuse to Lady Parmeter this evening and go to Richmond instead, Drummond, so tell Coleman to write a note and send it by an express messenger to say I am called into the country and can't get back till night," said Mr. Dursley, as he sat down to a hasty luncheon.

He was detained till four seeing patients, and then he escaped and went down to Richmond and dined at the "Star and Garter," and thought of Chloe, and wondered if there would ever be any hope for him in that quarter again, and was more determined than ever to go to Eastwich on Friday and remain there.

He heard from Sir Peter the next day, saying he could see him on Friday, but he thought he had very much better postpone his visit until the Saturday, but, of course, he could please himself.

"I mean to, Peter, my boy, and I don't mean you to be pleasing yourself with Chloe at my expense, I can tell you. If I don't make love to Mrs. Halkett on Thursday my name is not Paul, and you may think yourself very lucky if I don't come away engaged to her," he muttered to himself, as he paced up and down Sir Peter's consulting room after reading his letter.

The demon of jealousy was raging in Paul's breast; it was so unlike Peter to take such a mean advantage of him; besides, he had not appeared to admire Chloe when he saw her in her father's house. Had he been deceiving him then? Paul could not believe this possible, but it was very evident he admired her now, and would rather remain in prison than lose the chance of seeing her again. What other reason could he possibly have for desiring to postpone Paul's visit till Saturday?

"What would not I give to know if Peter is personating me, or if he is making love to her in his own person? Does she recognize him? If I could only know! She is so unlike other people; if she did recognize him, she would not show it—she would enjoy the game and play it better than any of us. Little witch! Egad! it would be hard lines indeed if Peter were to win her after all; Peter, who really was the cause of her

father's death. Well, Paul, my boy, if this happens, you can rise to heroism by just holding your tongue; and it is about as easy as being burnt alive. I wonder why woman was necessary to the Creator's scheme. And that reminds me I am going to speak on the emancipation of women to-night. By Chloe! I will let them have it; Peter rather favours, or pretends to favour, the claims of these modern shrieking sisters; he does it from diplomacy, to conciliate his possible lady-patients, I suppose. I'll conciliate them to-night, and I should like to see Peter's face when he reads the report in to-morrow's paper."

Thus mused Mr. Dursley in private. That evening, when he rose to speak to a large meeting of Liberal Unionists on the question whether the franchise should be extended to women or no, he thus delivered himself:

"Ladies and gentlemen, but more especially ladies, you have done me the honour to ask me to say whether or no, in my humble opinion, the fairer half of creation should be allowed a voice in the government of the country. By all means; it would be most unfair of the other half, to which I unfortunately belong, to deny it them. Have they not proved themselves to be the equals of men in everything except the mere trifle of physical strength? Do they not compete with us in every walk of life? True at present we have no soldiers, no sailors, no lawyers, no parsons among the gentler sex, but doubtless in time we shall have all these professions thrown open to them. As for the law, the objections to that profession being adopted by ladies are in my opinion far less than the objections to lady doctors. I am quite sure if I were on my trial I would far rather be prosecuted, defended and judged by a woman than by a man, and I believe there is scarcely a man in this room who would not agree with me. I think, though, when we see fair girl graduates in wigs and gowns, acting as barristers or judges, the criminals, if women, should have the option of being prosecuted, defended and tried by men, and I am inclined to think the services of the lady barristers and judges would in those cases generally be dispensed with. As for women-soldiers, is it not reserved to a woman-soldier to be canonised for her skill and bravery in leading an army? We men can boast no Saint Joan of Arc! The question of women being admitted to the clerical profession is not one I can enter into here, it is too

serious ; but I am told a certain section of women maintain that the priests of the future will be women. I cannot say that I expect to live to see this prophecy fulfilled, nor have I the least desire to do so. For my part I would rather see them occupying the benches of the House of Commons and the Gilded Chamber, than in the stalls of our cathedrals and churches. Then there is the navy. What can be prettier and more becoming than the uniform of our sailors? True a naval officer's uniform is less adapted to adorn the female form divine, but no doubt it could be modified. As for sea-sickness, we all know that is a mere trifle—modern women would scorn to take such a weakness into consideration ; besides, do we men not frankly confess that women bear pain and illness far better than we do? If then woman, modern woman I mean—we are all agreed our grandmothers were unfit for any of these things—but if modern woman is qualified physically and mentally to be soldier, sailor, member of parliament, county councillor, lawyer, barrister, judge, doctor, journalist, artist, violinist, critic, actress, literary woman, not to mention the lower occupations ; if she can golf, cycle, cricket, share all our pleasures as well as our professions, why should she not also vote? There is only one post in my opinion which modern woman is unfitting herself to fill, but then that is a post modern woman despises ; in olden times, when doubtless humanity was green in judgment and man was in his salad days, then this position was thought the highest, the noblest, the happiest, the best that woman could be called upon to fill. *Nous avons changé tout cela.* We know now that position is far too humdrum, too common-place, too humble, too degrading for modern woman to dream of occupying ; it involves too much self-sacrifice, too much submission, too much subjection, too much of the power of forgiveness, too much love, for it is the position of Wife. No, my friends, give modern woman all she asks for, open all the professions, always excepting the highest of all, to her, give her the franchise, give her her own sweet will in everything, but mind this : Do not give, do not offer her, for she despises it, the confidence, the friendship, the affection, the tender care, the watchful love every true man offers his wife. I now beg to second the resolution proposed by Mrs. Camden, that in the opinion of this meeting the franchise should be extended to women."

Soon after the delivery of this remarkable speech, which had the effect of mortally offending all the modern women present, and delighting those with less up-to-date views, Mr. Dursley left the meeting, chuckling aloud as he pictured to himself Sir Peter reading the report of the same.

"I seconded the resolution, but I did more harm to the cause than if I had poured forth volleys of abuse upon them," he thought as he reached Sir Peter's house.

"Drummond, I am sent for to the country ; it is a most urgent case ; I can't possibly go till Friday, though. I must get off by the eleven o'clock train on Friday morning, and I dine out to-morrow evening," he announced to Drummond, who was in attendance as usual.

"Yes, you do, and the mischief will come of it," thought Drummond, who strongly disapproved of this course.

Mr. Dursley got through the next day as successfully as he could have hoped ; most of the patients were strangers, with the exception of an Eastwich man, who knew Paul rather well, but who evidently did not suspect it was he, though on leaving he remarked :

"Excuse me, but what a remarkable likeness there is between you and your brother, not in personal appearance so much, because his beard makes such a difference."

"He is clean shaven now, though," said Paul.

"Indeed, he has more colour than you too, but it is in little tricks of manner and in the expression I notice it so much. I could almost think I was speaking to Dursley," said the Eastwich man.

"So you are, my friend, if you only knew it," thought Paul.

He found his dinner with Mrs. Halkett was a *tête-à-tête*.

"It is very naughty of me, I know, Sir Peter. Of course I ought to have had a chaperon, but it would have been such a bore for all three of us, and you and I are such old friends, I thought it did not matter," said Mrs. Halkett, whose dinner dress would have scandalized Drummond could he have seen her large expanse of gleaming arms and neck.

"What the deuce am I to do all the evening ? I must make love to her in self-defence ; I daren't smoke, she would suspect me. She knows Peter hates tobacco, or she is the kind of woman to beg a man to enjoy his pipe and her society at the same time.

I'll make an engagement to take her to the theatre next week ; we can occupy a good half-hour deciding which to go to," thought Paul.

By the end of the evening, he had engaged himself to dine with Mrs. Halkett, and take her to the theatre on the following Thursday ; she was to come and see him professionally one day at the beginning of the week, and he had promised to drop in to pot-luck on Sunday. Besides this, he had confided to his hostess that a man in his position was obliged to marry again, for professional reasons, apart from any personal considerations, to which Mrs. Halkett replied in her most sympathetic manner that she had always felt he ought to do so.

"I have often longed to have the courage to hint as much to you ; it seemed such a grievous pity that your career should be handicapped by the fact that you are a widower when that might so easily be remedied. I am so glad you have broken the ice and spoken openly to me about it, Sir Peter," she added.

"Yes," thought Paul, "I have broken the ice, but I have no intention of plunging in, my friend, well as I have dined and good as your wines are ; though it would serve old Peter right if I did put a certain question, for there is no doubt what your answer would be. However, I don't want to involve the old boy in an action for breach of promise of marriage."

"It is a great relief to me to be able to speak openly on a subject at once so delicate and so important. I have my children to think of as well as my career, and for their sakes it behoves me to be careful, since their happiness as well as my own is involved in my choice," said Paul, rising and assuming one of Sir Peter's favourite attitudes.

"I dote on children," said Mrs. Halkett pensively and pointedly.

"Many women do," said Paul ; "especially when they desire to marry widowers with families," was his unspoken thought, as he took his departure after a farewell that would have made Sir Peter's hair stand on end had he witnessed it.

"Forgive me, Chloe," muttered Paul to himself, as he lighted a cigar in the street and walked home, chuckling to himself at the thought of Sir Peter's disgust when he found himself engaged to take Mrs. Halkett to the theatre, and drop in to dinner on Sunday as well. He timed his visit to his brother the next day

so as to arrive about two o'clock at the gaol ; he would not be allowed to stay more than an hour with his brother, at the end of which time he intended Sir Peter to leave and the real Paul Dursley to remain and receive Chloe and her sister. This was what he proposed to do ; but there is a Higher Power who sometimes frustrates the proposals of man.

CHAPTER XV.

CHLOE INVADES THE SURGERY.

"BERTHA ! I have made a mistake."

Thus Chloe, on the evening of her first visit to the prison ; the time was half-past ten, the place was Bertha's bedroom, which Chloe, robed in a pink dressing-gown, invaded on purpose to make the above remark.

Bertha was sitting by the fire, also in her dressing-gown, reading her Bible and thinking of Sir Peter Dursley.

"What about, dear—your accounts ?

"No, Bertha, no ; the state of my affections, not of my finances. It is lucky I have found it out, though ; lucky for you as well as for me. Don't blush, you dear silly old Bertha, you ! Do you think I did not see you to-day in his cell ? Do you think I did not see him ?"

"Chloe, dear, what do you mean ?"

"I mean that, until to-day, I thought I was in love with, well, you know whom, and I have made a mistake ; I am not in love with him, nor is he with me ; I made a mistake about that also," said Chloe, throwing herself prone on the hearthrug.

"Chloe ! dear, I don't think you have made a mistake," said Bertha gently.

"You know nothing at all about it, Bertha. Now you listen to me and I'll explain it. Till to-day," and as she spoke she raised herself to her knees, and clasped her hands on Bertha's Bible, open at the account of St. Peter's imprisonment.

"Till to-day the sound of his voice was sweeter music to my ears than the sound of the silver trumpets in Rome ; the sight of him was pleasanter to me than the sight of an angel ; the touch of his hand was ecstasy ; to be in his presence was to be in heaven."

"Chloe, darling, you frighten me," said Bertha, terrified, not so

much by her sister's words, as by the passion that was kindling her little pale face.

"Listen! To-day his voice sounded like any other man's; his face was more like St. Peter's than an angel's; to touch him affected me no more than the touch of this Bible; to be with him tantalized me so, it was more like being in purgatory than in heaven. Till to-day he never looked at any one else when I was in the room; to-day he looked at you nearly all the time; he is like me, he has made a mistake, and he has found it out in time, just as I have done. *Tant mieux.*"

"I don't think either you or Mr. Dursley have made a mistake," said Bertha.

"You dear, stolid, stupid, sober old thing, you just know nothing at all about it; you believe what Chloe tells you, Chloe who has had as many men making love to her as you have fingers on this hand, and will have as many more before she has done, not to mention the thumbs. The fingers are those I reject, the thumbs are those I accept; one thumb will have to count as a finger, the other will be the one I shall end up with. One is Paul; the other—who knows? perhaps it will be Sir Peter, they are as like as your two thumbs now Paul has shaved off his beard. Good-night, Bertha, I am talking nonsense; it is time I went to bed."

The next morning Chloe came down to breakfast in a state of great excitement.

"Augusta, I want to go to London at once," she announced, as she helped herself to ham; her appetite was not affected by her troubles.

"What do you mean by at once? Before breakfast?"

"What I say; to-morrow or the next day, as soon as ever we can get off. Bertha, can you be ready to-morrow?"

"No, dear; I am not going till after next Friday. I can't possibly get off before," said Bertha quietly. And every one knew that when Bertha spoke in that tone she meant what she said; she was one of those people who very rarely assert themselves, but when they do, no power on earth can turn them from their purpose.

Chloe endeavoured to do so, although she knew it was hopeless, and at last had to be content with Bertha's promise to go on the following Saturday.

"I thought you did not intend going to London until after Mr. Dursley's release from prison?" said Augusta.

"Well, I didn't, but I made a mistake."

"How he must be looking forward to his release; half the pleasure in life is in anticipation; I dare say he is very happy," said Constance.

"Don't be absurd, Constance; he is utterly miserable and quite unlike himself, and as bored as I am at having to vegetate here for another eight live-long days. Oh! how deadly, deadly dull it is. I should like to shoot that thrush singing its lying song at this hour of the day," said Chloe spitefully.

"Chloe, how wicked of you! the thrush is singing you a lesson in cheerfulness, and you call it a lying song," began Constance.

"You need not repeat Chloe's vulgar language, Constance," said Augusta.

"I am never bored," continued Constance.

"You are content to bore others," interrupted Chloe.

"And I cannot understand any one feeling dull at breakfast time; there is the whole day with all its duties and interests, and maybe a few little cares, to look forward to; the cares are all in the day's work, so we must be content to take the bitters with the sweets," said Constance.

"Do be quiet, Constance; your cheerfulness is trying enough in the middle of the day, it is simply maddening at this hour. Bertha, if you won't ride over to see Miss Dursley with me to day, I'll never speak to you again," said Chloe, taking some violets out of a vase and throwing them across the table at Bertha.

"But I will go with pleasure. Shall I order the horses at twelve and then we can stay to luncheon?" said Bertha, anxious to conciliate her sister in little things, since she could not yield to her about going to London.

They found Dorothy in the garden with Sir Peter's children; the youngest boy was on her back, while Nona and Paul were very busy making gardens, by the very simple means of planting some cut flowers in the little beds Dorothy had marked out as their special property.

She was delighted to see them, and would fain have sent for Miss Sanders to take charge of the children while she entertained her guests, but Bertha begged to be allowed to look after

them, and Chloe carried her off to the stables to see to the horses and to tell her of their visit to Eastwich Gaol.

"What is Dr. Crofton like? Is he nice?" asked Chloe.

"My dear, he is a perfectly odious little man, nervous, delicate, a vile temper, at least compared to Paul, who is one of the best-tempered men in the world and one of the most cheerful. This little man gets fits of depression; he is most reserved; won't allow me even to mention professional matters to him. In fact, if it were not for the children, I really don't know what I should do, for their governess is as complete a little nonentity as you can wish to see. I am really reduced to quarrelling with Dr. Crofton for the sake of a little excitement."

"Your brother told us you did not get on with him when we went to see him yesterday."

"You have been to see Paul, then? How sweet of you. Tell me all about him. How did he look? Is he very miserable? Can he eat the food? What does he do all day?"

"He did not look a bit like himself; his beard is shaved off and he looked pale; he seemed subdued, but he was contented; he did not mention the food, and he writes a book all day about diseases of the heart."

"Paul writing a book on diseases of the heart! Peter is, I know—but Paul. Oh! well, I suppose Paul is copying some of it out for him. But I can't understand his being contented in prison, unless it was just while you were there."

"He did not in the least care about that, he was more pleased to see Bertha than me," interrupted Chloe.

"'Tell that to the marines,' my dear. I wonder he did not mention the food, for he is very particular about that. I know exactly what he likes, of course, so I know how to cater for him, but I expected he would have had plenty of complaints as to prison diet."

"No, he did not complain of it; he was not in the least like himself in any way. We promised to go and see him again next Friday; I am going to take my violin, and Bertha is going to tell him all about Sir Peter's children."

"Peter's children! My dear girl, Paul won't care to hear about them. Tell him about Paris and Fly and Dr. Crofton; that will interest him far more."

"He seemed to take the greatest interest in the children;

I tell you, dear Miss Dursley, he was not in the least like himself."

"So it seems ; for it is very unlike him not to write to me, nor let me go and see him. I confess I don't understand it at all. Here comes the doctor ; let us get out of his way. He always goes in by the surgery-door, Paul never did," said Miss Dursley as a dog-cart was driven into the yard.

"I am going in by the surgery too. Come along, Miss Dursley, and introduce me to Dr. Crofton," said Chloe, catching hold of the reluctant Dorothy's hand and dragging her into the surgery, which Dr. Crofton had just entered.

"Excuse us, Dr. Crofton, but Miss Dane wants to see the surgery. Allow me to introduce you : Dr. Crofton, Miss Chloe Dane."

Dr. Crofton bowed very stiffly and opened the door of the surgery which led into the house, as a polite hint that he wished his visitors to pass through it.

"Oh ! I am not going away yet, Dr. Crofton ; I want to see what a surgery is like. What a lot of bottles, and all the names written in Latin so that the unlearned should not understand. I am learned ; at least I know Latin, so I do understand. Oh ! that is where you make pills, is it ? Now do let me make some pills, please, will you ? Oh ! wait a minute. I see some lavender-water up on the top shelf ; I love lavender-water ; I am going to climb up on those steps and get some."

Dr. Crofton was so taken aback he could not say anything, he only frowned, while Dorothy leant against the counter and trilled out one of her pretty laughs as Chloe climbed up the steps.

"Come here, Dr. Crofton, please, and take the bottle or else I shall drop it. That's right ; now soak my handkerchief in it, please, now Miss Dursley's, and now hand the bottle back to me and I'll put it up again. Wait a minute. Does Mr. Dursley like lavender-water, Miss Dursley ?"

"Yes, very much. Peter can't bear it."

"Then I shall take Mr. Dursley some on Friday. Now you must get me a very nice bottle, Dr. Crofton, and label it and seal the cork and do it up very nicely in white paper, and seal that too. I'll come down and show you how to do it," and Chloe jumped off the steps and, to Miss Dursley's infinite amusement,

ordered Dr. Crofton about so charmingly that he could not refuse to obey her, though he was inwardly fuming with rage all the while.

The bell rung for luncheon before the lavender-water was done up to Chloe's satisfaction, but she paid no attention to it beyond sending Dorothy to the dining-room, and saying she would follow with the doctor in a few minutes.

"Poor Miss Dursley! I do pity her! How dreadfully dull it must be for her now Paul, I mean Mr. Dursley, is in prison. No wonder she was glad to see us. I should go mad if I had to live here with you, Dr. Crofton. It must be terrible. Do you never talk?"

"Sometimes," said Dr. Crofton, privately resolving to talk very seriously to Dorothy about Miss Chloe's impertinence, which amused while it irritated him; and also wondering if Miss Dursley had been complaining of being dull.

Chloe's remarks bore fruit that evening when, instead of shutting himself up alone in the surgery, he joined Miss Dursley in the drawing-room.

"What do you think of Chloe, Dr. Crofton?" said Dorothy.

"She is very charming."

"I thought you would be charmed with her."

"I was not at all; but that does not prevent me from acknowledging her right to the epithet. I trust, however, you will not bring her into the surgery again: it took me ever so long to put things straight."

"I could not help it. She dragged me in. I should not have dared to venture without her. It would have been as much as my head was worth to have done so," said Dorothy laughing.

"I am glad you are more amenable to discipline than Miss Chloe," said Dr. Crofton.

"I am afraid Paul won't know me when he comes back; you have kept me in such order."

"I am afraid, as Miss Chloe kindly told me, it is terribly dull for you."

"Not always. When you are quite well, and—well, in a good temper, it is not dull at all. When you have a fit of depression I confess I get depressed too."

"And that makes me worse. Why don't you round on me

and tell me I am the worst-tempered fellow you ever met, instead of leaving me alone as you do?"

"I dare not," said Dorothy blushing.

"Nonsense; *you* could do it with impunity, and it would do me all the good in the world, even if I was worse at first. I am a vile temper, I know, but it is partly ill-health and partly shyness. Still it is very hard lines on you, as Miss Chloe kindly pointed out to me."

"Chloe is an interfering little elf. You are an excellent companion when you choose," said Miss Dursley.

"And when I get another attack of the blues you come and pitch into me, and don't be afraid. I can stand it from you. That's the surgery bell; I must go," said Dr. Crofton.

And Dorothy did not feel dull any more that evening. On the contrary, she began to find her life under present circumstances was more exciting than when Paul was her only companion.

"I believe he means me to do it, but I doubt if I shall ever have the courage. He is so different when he is in one of his moods. However, I will take him at his word, and the next time he is in the depths I'll storm at him, even at the risk of being sworn at. He evidently thinks I hate being left with him. Chloe has instilled that into him—the little monkey. So Paul is writing a book and interested in Peter's children. I can't understand him; certainly men are a mystery. Well, I am going to bed."

Thus meditating on Dr. Crofton and her brother, Dorothy Dursley presently fell asleep.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHO'S WHO?

ON the second Friday after the real Sir Peter found himself in Eastwich Gaol, his brother Paul travelled down to Eastwich to visit him, with the intention of taking his place and sending the great doctor back to London, which, in Paul's opinion, he ought never to have left.

"'The game is not worth the candle,' and I have had enough of it. I am not a nervous man, but the risk disturbs even my slumbers. It is like having an infernal machine under your

pillow," thought Paul as he approached his destination, and remembered that it behoved him to play his part very carefully.

He was dressed precisely as he and Sir Peter were dressed on the day of the trial, they having agreed that whenever they were to meet they should be dressed exactly alike in every particular. He lunched at a pastrycook's in the city, and then walked up to the gaol and asked to see Mr. Dursley, and as the governor had given orders he was to be admitted, he was shown at once to Sir Peter's cell, instead of being obliged to go to the visiting-parlour, where two warders were always present.

The warder locked the door after admitting Paul, and the brothers were left alone.

"I hardly expected you would have come to-day," said Sir Peter.

"My dear fellow, another rubber would have settled our business for us. Those fellows dine with you to-morrow for you to have your revenge, and you must be there, old boy. They can't hear us, can they?"

"No. Do you mean me to go back this afternoon? If so, I think you are alarming yourself quite unnecessarily; we had much better remain as we are. I am getting on capitally with my book. I really don't think I shall go," said Sir Peter.

"There is one thing I can tell you: if you wait till next week you will find yourself engaged to Mrs. Halkett," said Paul, seating himself on the table, while Sir Peter sprang to his feet.

"Zounds, Paul! You don't mean to say you have been playing the fool with that woman!"

"I have been amusing myself with her. You have had Chloe to visit you, I believe?" said Paul calmly.

"Mrs. Halkett! Why, it takes all my time to keep the woman at arm's length! What devil possessed you to flirt with her?" said Sir Peter, walking up and down the room.

"You have to drop in on Sunday to supper, to dine with her and take her to the theatre on Thursday, and she is coming to consult you professionally on Wednesday," said Paul.

"Then not all the warders in the castle shall drag me from here to-day. You have got yourself into this scrape, you may get out of it!" said Peter.

"The difficulty is, it is you who are involved in the toils; it is your title and position she is after. But, apart from her, you must go, Peter; I can play your part very well in your con-

sulting-room, but with other doctors, or at the club, or in society, I won't run the risk again. Go you must."

"I'll be shot if I'll go to day. You go and settle Mrs. Halkett, and come down again next week, and I'll think about it; I am very comfortable here, and I enjoy the rest."

"Peter! It won't do. You must go home and I must stay here. We ought never to have run such a risk; the fear of discovery is turning my hair grey in a week. A month of it, if I could keep it up so long, would land me in an asylum. I can't stand another day of it, so when the time is up and the warder returns, you go back to London and leave me here."

"I expect the Danes this afternoon," said Sir Peter.

"So do I, otherwise I might have postponed my visit until tomorrow. Hang it all, Peter, don't you know I would rather be here, if Chloe will visit me once a week, than in London knowing she is visiting you?"

"But she thinks I am you; the other girl knows I am not; she suspected me, so I confided in her while Miss Chloe was weeping over your sad lot."

"Then you did not flirt with Chloe?"

"I! I scarcely spoke to her. As she thought I was you, it is highly probable I have roused her jealousy, if so, all the better for you."

"It is a good thing I came down here to-day; it strikes me you have been involving me in an entanglement with Bertha; however, I have had my revenge with Mrs. Halkett. Have you seen my speech on the woman question?"

"I have. You seem to have contrived to have done as much mischief in ten days as most men do in a lifetime. The Halkett affair is beyond a joke."

"Not if you go back at once and snub her."

"Time is up, sir," said a warder at this juncture, through the grating of the door, and the next minute he had unlocked the door and was standing inside the room.

When he looked through the grating Paul was still sitting on the table, his hat, gloves and stick by his side, and Sir Peter was standing with his back to the fire; when the warder entered the cell a minute later, one of the brothers was seated at the writing-table, the other was standing on the opposite side of the table near Paul's hat and cane.

"Well, I'll be hanged if I should know which is which of you two gentlemen, if it weren't that my prisoner was seated at the table," said the warder.

"It is lucky for one of us that we have no doubt on the subject. Well, Peter, my boy, we must part. Good-bye. Come and see me again as soon as you can," said the brother who was seated at the table, rising and shaking hands with the other, who somewhat reluctantly took up his hat and gloves and departed.

"Good-bye. I'll leave my card on the governor on my way out, and if he is at home, thank him for his consideration and kindness."

"Yes, do. Good-bye, old fellow," and the prisoner returned to his seat with a sigh, which, whether real or affected, was very natural.

Half-an-hour later the warder returned to ask if he wished to see the Misses Dane, as they had been in the prison some time, and were now at liberty to come to him.

"Certainly. I shall be most pleased to see them," said the prisoner, and Chloe and Bertha were ushered in, a warder following with Chloe's violin case, which he placed on the table.

Bertha entered first and turned first red and then pale as she shook hands with the prisoner; then came Chloe, pale as usual and cool as a cucumber till she felt the pressure of the prisoner's hand; and then her little white face flushed scarlet, her great black eyes dropped and her lips twitched nervously.

The next moment she had recovered herself.

"You look better to-day, more like yourself than you did last week, you have a shade more colour. I suppose you are getting used to imprisonment," said Chloe, clasping her hands after her favourite fashion, and looking the prisoner up and down.

"It is the pleasure of seeing you and your sister," he replied, but the last clause seemed to be an after-thought.

"Look at those flowers all withered and dead! The idea of a doctor keeping faded flowers in his room," said Chloe, making a rush at the flowers on the table, which remained just as she had left them the previous week.

"I could not throw away what you had brought," said he.

"It was Bertha who brought them, not I; it shows how ex-

cellent your memory is," said Chloe, throwing the dead flowers into the fire.

"It was you who arranged them, though, Chloe dear," said Bertha gently.

"Yes ; well, I am not going to arrange these fresh ones to-day. Now, Mr. Dursley, please to observe it is Bertha, not Chloe, who gathered those flowers. Bertha who brought them here, Bertha who is going to arrange them, and when they are faded they are to be thrown away notwithstanding. Do you understand ?"

"Perfectly. Won't you sit down ?"

"No, I won't. I am going to play to you. Unpack my violin, please, while I look round. What a lot of Sir Peter's writing you have here ?"

"Chloe, dear, you should not look at Mr. Dursley's papers," interrupted Bertha gently.

"Oh, I am not reading anything. There's that child's photograph still there. Don't you want to ask Bertha all about your nieces and nephews ? you talked of nothing else last week," said Chloe, as she took Nona's photograph out of its frame and reversed it.

"Not particularly. Have you seen them ?"

"What a question ! Didn't we promise faithfully to go to Lyneham on purpose to see them, and didn't we go, and didn't I tease the very life out of Dr. Crofton ? And oh ! by the way, didn't I bring you some lavender-water ?" And Chloe produced the bottle of lavender-water which Dr. Crofton had been unwillingly obliged to prepare.

"Thank you ! how very kind of you !" said the prisoner.

"Open it and take some ; give me your handkerchief and I'll scent it for you. There, isn't it lovely ? Why does not Sir Peter like it ? Miss Dursley said he didn't."

"I don't know," said the prisoner, sniffing at the lavender-water with great gusto.

"How well he acts," thought Bertha, who was watching the scene with interest.

"Now I am going to play to you. What shall it be ?" said Chloe, tuning her violin.

"Anything you please ; if I ask for something sad you will probably give me the maddest, merriest hornpipe you can compose on the spur of the moment."

"What a character to give me. Now listen," and she played a wild melancholy air, so plaintive and sad that even the unemotional Bertha begged her to give them something more cheerful.

"I like sad music," said the prisoner.

And immediately the music became merry and glad; faster and faster flew the bow, wilder and wilder grew the music; the violin seemed to laugh, a thousand imps seemed to be dancing wildly through the room, singing for very joy as they whirled past, until at last the music ceased, and the musician sank exhausted on a chair.

The prisoner clapped his hands and cried, "Bravo, bravo" Bertha gently praised her sister's performance, and presently Chloe jumped up and exclaimed:

"Put it away, please. I can't play any more to-day; I can't often play like that. If I could I should make my fortune. Do you know, Mr. Dursley, I am coming out as a professional. I am going to London with Bertha to study. We are going at once," said Chloe.

"Indeed! Why, may I ask?"

"For many reasons. I want occupation. I want an interest and an object in life. I want a career. I want to live. The others only exist. I must live or I shall die, which is paradoxical but true. So off to London we two go to morrow most likely, don't we, Bertha?" and Chloe put her arm round Bertha, waltzed round the table with her, and then pulled out the Maréchal Niel roses her sister had been endeavouring to arrange, and put them all but one back according to her own taste.

"Here's one for your button-hole, Mr. Dursley; would you like me to put it in for you as a very great treat?"

"I should indeed be proud if you would."

"Pride is a sin; however, prison will correct it, I doubt not. Give me a pin, Bertha. Mind it is Bertha's rose and Bertha's pin, and Chloe's fingers that put it in."

Chloe was standing close to the unfortunate prisoner, pinning the rose into his coat as she said this, and not hurrying over the operation.

"You witch! You bewildering angel! Take care," whispered the prisoner, and as Chloe looked up, she saw a little drop of blood on his under-lip and a light in his eyes that made her drop hers and sent her blood through her veins at double-quick pace.

She laughed a little nervous laugh, and Bertha, who was watching them, looked surprised and vexed.

"Bertha! It is getting time we went home. How long do you mean to stay? I could not get you away last time, even when the warder came, I remember."

"Chloe, dear, I am quite ready."

"The time is not up. The warder will come when it is, never fear. If you are going to London soon, shall I see you again?" said the prisoner.

"I am afraid not, we go to-morrow," said Bertha.

"We don't do anything of the kind, Bertha. How can you tell such stories! You will insist on visiting Mr. Dursley every week while he is in prison, so I am obliged to postpone my violin studies till his release. You know that, Bertha, as well as I do," said Chloe.

"But, Chloe, our rooms are taken," began Bertha.

"For to-morrow month, I know, and that is when we are going, not a day sooner. Do you wish to be visited next week, Mr. Paul Dursley?" said Chloe, completely silencing the bewildered Bertha.

"If you would have the charity."

"Constance and Augusta will, at any rate," said Chloe mischievously.

"I shall expect them, then, next week," said the prisoner.

"And you will not be disappointed. By the way, why don't you let Miss Dursley come and see you? She wants to come very much; she is dreadfully dull, shut up with that doctor and Sir Peter's children."

"Oh, the children make it very cheerful for her, she would not know what to do without them," said Bertha.

"Well, you see, I don't like to ask leave for more visitors; I have had Peter here to-day besides you."

"Oh, we don't count; we visit all the prisoners once a week," said Chloe.

A light flashed across Bertha's face on hearing that Sir Peter had been there that day, for she was fairly puzzled as to which of the brothers this was; if Sir Peter, that is, if Paul Dursley had been there that day, it was possible the brothers had changed again, and that this man was Paul.

"May your sister come?" interrupted Chloe.

"I think not ; I have only another month and a few days to be here now, and it would be sure to upset Dorothy. I would rather she did not."

"It does not upset Bertha and me," said Chloe.

"But we are not Mr. Dursley's sisters," said Bertha.

"Time is up, sir," said the inexorable warder.

And then when the prisoner said "good-bye" to Bertha, he squeezed her hand, and looking straight into her eyes, said :

"Don't betray me, for all our sakes."

And Bertha went home fairly puzzled.

Was it Sir Peter, or was it Mr. Dursley ?

She could not tell.

Chloe was in no manner of doubt on that score ; she, too, went away puzzled, but what puzzled her was the difference in her own feelings on her previous visit and her feelings on the present occasion.

"Good-bye. You send Miss Dane and Miss Constance next week if you dare ; just you send them," were the prisoner's parting words to her, in a tone of threatening, which sent Chloe away laughing merrily all down the corridor.

And never a doubt as to the prisoner's identity had she.

The sound of his voice, the touch of his hand, the light in his eyes, all left no shadow of doubt this week in what Chloe called her mind.

(To be continued.)

The "Sign of the Cross."

By EMILIA AYLMER GOWING.

WITH the last years of the waning century, fast drawing in towards the close of an epoch in our planetary time, the inhabitants of this whirling star would seem to suffer a resistless attraction towards the immeasurable ages of a future state, urged by a mingled wonder, curiosity, and fear into speculations that crush our poor human faculties by their boundless immensity "with thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls."

It is as if a dim, unwilling sense were forced upon the most engrossed of self-worshippers, a new capacity to discern the dread catastrophe of all things, looming, in a shadowy mirror, among the possibilities of the century yet unborn—a terror somehow mixed in their imagination with "the end of the world," a consummation surely to be meted out to each individual one of us within the measure of years to be entered upon with the last stroke of midnight 1900.

Men and women of all sorts and conditions have caught the general straining of the spiritual perception towards the thin, impassable veil that so effectually cuts us off from the unseen realities; every eye, fixed upon the mysterious curtain, keeps on peering into its blank space, in earnest desire to catch some glimpse through its inexplicable meshes of what we dread or hope to see beyond the shores of time.

The common instinct sways alike Agnostic and believer, breaking out, as in the days of the Roman empire, in a strange variety of extraneous worship, growing out of Spiritualism, Theosophy, esoteric Buddhism, and other revivals of old mythic creeds, wherewith we strive and labour to build ourselves temples of sand based upon a few grains of impalpable truth. "Too superstitious" in our sober moods, we endure the invasion of our lighter hours by the fashionable craze of the "problem play," holding the mirror up to poor human nature on its seamy, brutal side. Who would have thought it, that the vogue and relish of such pungent fare would be outdone, swept away like a dust-heap

before the strong wind of an absolutely pure and holy Christian miracle play? Thus it has been since the advent of the "Sign of the Cross" at the Lyric theatre, early in January this year.

A great upheaval of the masses marked the opening night. "The common people" gladly heard, swallowing with their eyes and ears the spectacle of the cross of "Christos," planted in the polluted earth of Nero's Rome, watered with the blood of martyrs in the great amphitheatre, shining above the heads of the perishing saints with the halo of uncreated light. This is not a mere stage performance, but a living show of the shadows of an ever-memorable past. It is a miracle play and more than a miracle play; for the whole conception and working out are intensely human and real—a drama, carved out of the heart and mind and existence of our brothers and sisters of eighteen hundred years ago, brought close to ourselves of to-day; Armenian horrors and the cruel death of many a missionary in Africa and distant China re-enacted before our eyes in the garb and frame of Rome some thirty years after the Crucifixion.

The first night decided the verdict of the crowd. Would the "cultured classes" confirm it? As the days went on the seats were filled, but with a sprinkling only of "society." One might have supposed that the matter was too good, that the praying and preaching would have been caviare to the smart section of our habitual playgoers. I recall the sharp condemnation of one youth of social parts:

"I don't pretend to much religion; but I have enough of it to hate that play. It's blasphemous. What was the Lord Chamberlain dreaming of when he let it pass?"

True; the "Sign of the Cross," until very recent years, would have gone upon our courtly Index Expurgatorius, along with most of our modern successes. Happily, in "the spacious days of great Elizabeth" the censor's scissors were not unsheathed to clip Will Shakespeare's audacious wings.

"I have seen it twice, and it bored me, oh, so dull!" buzzes a fair flutterer of fashion, blown like a moth to the flame upon the strong wind-current of her own world and floated within Mr. Wilson Barrett's doors, there to sit out, time after time, what she is too slight a thing to take in or enjoy. "I don't like it; he's too *décolleté*, too proud of that neck and arms," is the delicious, ungrammatical comment of another dainty dame, too deeply

enamoured of her own "good beauties" to appreciate the antique marbles of Rome.

But the shallow men and women who carp and croak are a small minority. The rushing tide fills every corner of the house night by night. In the vast audience, princes, nobles, thinkers, workers, soldiers, scholars, mix with the idlers, the triflers, the ignorant, the thoughtless, the selfish, the earnest, the mourners, and the poor. Anglican priests, Nonconformist divines, ay, the theatre-hating Salvation Army itself, swell the numbers and multiply the variety of a concourse more strange than any bedfellows with whom poverty can compel the proud to become acquainted.

What is the secret of a common consent amounting to a portent of strange issues in our time? Several causes culminate in the remarkable result. There is the marvellous power of the drama, constructed on lines of surpassing skill, winding up the strong story from point to point with breathless interest to the end, an action that never drops for a moment; there is the stir and movement of Imperial Rome, the sharp contrast of pagan revel and Christian endurance unto death; there is the absolute human leaven pervading every word and act of all those creatures of history or imagination that move before our eyes in their habit as they lived; but above and beyond all there is the everlasting power of the Gospel itself, preached to the heart and intelligence with the thrill and conviction of a Spurgeon sermon. Many who enter to scoff and condemn must leave those playhouse walls as believers; many, like Felix, must hear and tremble as the words of a long-despised old book, sharper than a two-edged sword, pierce to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow, to the confusion of their hollow, wasted lives, too often spent in the acting of a lie.

Here we assist at an actuality. The New Testament and Tacitus are opened before our eyes, under the electric flash of a rediscovered light. We are in Rome during the brief years when Poppæa, the fair and frail, held her state as empress by Nero's side. Much about this time it was that St. Paul was brought up before the Imperial couple for judgment in the great basilica, hard by the Forum and palaces of the "divine" Nero Claudius Cæsar Augustus. Daily the cry arose, "*Christianos ad leones!*" We see and hear the howling mob of Nero's spies and executioners.

Among the victims marked down for the nameless tortures and

wholesale slaughter of the amphitheatre shows is Mercia, a beautiful girl, half angel, half inspired prophetess. In the extremity of her peril Marcus Superbus enters on the scene. Here we have a repetition of the finest of all Mr. Wilson Barrett's creations, Claudian; a grander Roman than the former, a finer type of the pagan voluptuary, touched in the twinkling of an eye by the indescribable charm of a perfect maidenhood. By a sudden impulse he becomes Mercia's rescuer, and remains her thrall. Sated with the blandishments of a hundred Roman beauties, who crowd in adoration of his splendid physique and dissolute character, Marcus turns from them all with loathing, and devotes himself, soul and body, to the conquest of one pure maiden, who shrinks, trembling, from his lightest touch, and evades every breath of passion from the heathen lips that have sworn to master her resistance.

Again, opportunity favours Marcus where the Christians meet for prayer in the grove beside the Cestian bridge. A bitter stroke of fate has charged him with Nero's command to exterminate the Christians while his heart is turned towards the persecuted children of God. As the chant of hymns rises through the riverside grove, in the pale evening light, a company of Roman soldiers breaks into the sacred retreat. Despairing shrieks replace the song of worship as the defenceless people are hustled, hunted, slaughtered, with a barbarity that spares no living victim. Mothers sink in despair by the bodies of their slain little ones. The ground is strewn with the forms of men and women murdered. Marcus enters to stay the hideous scene and snatch his fair beloved out of the deadly pass. As she clings to her cross he clasps both together in his strong embrace; so by her pagan lover the Christian girl and the symbol of her faith are saved from desecration. Her foster-father shares in the same protection; but she is not restored to the shelter of their home. Marcus leads her away to his own palace as the captive of his sword.

We meet him next in the house of one Berenice, a "Woman who Did" in Rome of those days, one of the overmuch-married beauties who could boast of their three husbands in two years. In this neo-classical drama we have the irrepressible attractive type worthily represented by the Empress Poppæa and a fair posse of her congeners. No offence thereat is taken by matron

or maid, nor by any section of the Nonconformist conscience. The spirit of the presentation is everything. In the New Testament we have a woman who was a sinner, repented, and was forgiven. In the "Sign of the Cross" the exhibition of pagan profligacy is condoned, accepted as a wholesome warning to those advanced reformers among us who would teach man to blot God out of His own creation. In the great object-lessons provided by the Church in her mediæval Passion plays, the *rôle* assigned to the common enemy of man was ever a brilliant and conspicuous one, sometimes the best in the piece, invented, written, acted and produced within the sanctuary walls by clerks in Holy Orders. To put it plainly, hell and the devil had their full fling upon the hallowed stage, while outside imitators and all profane players were duly banned, anathematized, and excommunicate.

Most judiciously, in every point Mr. Wilson Barrett has copied from the old ecclesiastical daring and realism, with an instinctive sense of where to stop. He quotes the sacred text with reserve and reverence; he names "Christos," the correct title of the anointed King, given in the Greek Testament and handed down by Tacitus and Suetonius as the name of the Crucified One. Thus we are spared the repetition of our modern equivalent, more sacred to our ears, although less absolutely true. He does not shrink from a faithful picture of the horrors of heathendom as they prevailed under Nero's sway. At least, he goes as far as any historian dare in the English language. He brings us boldly face to face with the bestial carouse, the mad, sensual dances, the flinging away of shame, that marked the feast of a Roman noble and the corrupt company of the sons and daughters of darkness, the raiders and roysterers who were wont to follow their emperor in his midnight forays through the Roman streets, visiting the Imperial city with the terrors of an assault and capture by storm.

We are in the palace of Marcus Superbus, shown to us in the luxury that befitted the wealthiest man in Rome next to the emperor. In the midst of the frantic scene stands Mercia, the Christian captive, as one apart, compelled into the bacchante revel of open debauchery, where her purity and fortitude are the mark for general mockery and scorn. Beautiful women, unsexed, lead on the attack against the helpless girl, standing, tall and white as a lily or a marble statue, in her stainless draperies, the

symbol of an angel amongst the lost souls of an earthly hell. All the "swagger society," the "best people" among the world's elect, in a day not without some afterglow cast down as late as our own time, mock and mow at her like so many spiteful fiends. The slender form stands unbending, undismayed, sustained in its weakness and extremity by more than mortal power.

A more fiery trial awaits the virgin-martyr. Left alone with Marcus, the lights extinguished, the doors locked behind them, she has to fight the supreme battle of her defenceless maidenhood against the strong man, whose whole being has become one mad, irresistible hunger for her innocent charms; the man who would almost be a Christian for her sake, or, failing the gentle wooing of a lover to win her for his own, would turn and rend and devour her purity with the passion and fury of a beast of prey. Yet more, to this man, as we see in the end, the low beating of her secret heart inclines her against her will. In her dread pass of woman's uttermost peril, she appeals to his better nature; and the lover's madness, like a raging sea, is stayed and overruled. As she breaks from his arms, a supernatural light irradiates her head, and the sound of a Christian hymn floats in from the prison of the condemned saints, like a strain of distant paradise.

"Now thou wilt not harm me," pleads Mercia, and the fierce wooer, subdued and penitent, sinks, conquered, at her feet.

This scene, or something like it, is an old one on the stage, as in human life. It has never been presented with more truth to nature and grace, with a wilder storm of baffled passion drawn down, like fierce lightning from a cloud, by the resistance of a weak girl, and won to the tenderness of her pure love.

More thrilling, if possible more terrible in its reality, is the scene of the torture inflicted on the Christian boy, Stephanus, impersonated by Miss Haydee Wright. Many a spectator has cried out, "I cannot bear it; I would have rushed out of the theatre, only I was afraid to make a disturbance," and those very people have gone back and sat it out again and again. More harrowing than the torture scene in "La Tosca," it deals with the extremity of cruelty inflicted on a helpless young creature, whose only crime is the love of God. There is a mixture of weakness and immaturity all through this most telling part that awakes our deepest sympathies; no little Spartan hero is this,

but a gentle, tender boy, like one of our own children. He does not covet the burning crown of martyrdom ; he would fly from it if he could. We hear his shrieks under the pitiless torture ; we see the slight form carried in, motionless, paralyzed by the excess of pain, the pale lips that are tempted once and again to apostatize rather than endure any more the horrible agony. Imprisoned among the condemned in the dungeon of the amphitheatre, driven through the fatal passage into the arena, we see him rush back, appalled at the sight of blood, at the sound of the tigers hungering for his living flesh as their food. Then a word of faith from Mercia, one clasp to her heart, sends him back to meet death as the promise of paradise. We cease to pity, in our admiration and feeling of the eternal hope that takes away the sting of the lion's tooth, of the burning flame.

Mercia is doomed to follow the young Christian she has sent, rejoicing, to his martyrdom. In vain Marcus has stood before Nero's throne to plead for the life of his beloved. Poppæa must speak her word, inspired by her friend Berenice, who has cast eyes of passion upon the grand form of the Roman noble ; jealousy demands the innocent blood. The fair Christian girl who stands between Berenice and her latest fancy, Marcus, must be removed by death. Nero's gentler sentence would spare her upon condition of denying her faith.

Marcus enters the amphitheatre prison, bearer of the terms of mercy. "What wouldst thou with me?" asks the maiden, no longer of this world. He offers her life and happiness ; he will crush the tyrant Nero, possess his crown, and she shall share it as his honoured wife. "Thy wife ! thy wife !" her whispers repeat, and betray the yielding of her heart. But her soul is unconquered. Won to his breast at last, with the dawn of a new joy comes a higher heroism in her willing sacrifice of all to her duty and her God.

Marcus consents with her to die the martyr's death. They stand together hand in hand ; the great iron doors slide back, the blood-stained arena stretches behind them ; the Roman spears fence them in ; the roar of wild beasts and the fiercer roar of the people rise above their heads as they wait for the final signal with faces illuminated, transfigured by love and hope. The supreme words are spoken, and the dark curtain falls before

their sharp, brief passage into the hereafter of the blessed souls, the first-fruits of the redeemed.

Never was a nobler use made of the boundless influence for good or evil inherent in the acted scene, perhaps the most powerful engine that can sway the human mind towards right or wrong. Here the tragic muse enthrals us with all her arts of speech to eye and ear, converted to the spirit of a newer, higher light than Homer or Æschylus ever saw when their sublime creations inspired the men of Greece to ward off the attacks of the mighty armed East from the sacred, sea-bound soil of her free citizens. A better heroism is taught us by this appeal to all that is noblest and purest in our common human nature.

We have here a worthy example of work done by the actor-author and manager—a combination so magnificently met in Shakespeare. There can be no question that stage-craft is best mastered by a practical familiarity with the machine upon the working side. This has taught Mr. Wilson Barrett how far to go, carrying the public with him, where to avoid touching too close upon dangerous ground. He has done the great service of bringing into the theatre so many good people held aloof from its precincts by Puritan prejudice, whose wondering gaze can detect in this play nothing but what is congenial to their spirit; while the masses swarm in every night beneath the new sign, the Cross, enshrined in a halo of light.

It has been said, the literary quality of this piece is unequal to the sublime theme. It has been regretted that no dramatic poet, a Tennyson or a W. G. Wills, was at hand to give the true ring of word-music to the inspired lines that should have interpreted this creation. This occurred to me when Mr. Wilson Barrett assured me that the audience did not miss fine language in a play where he had sacrificed everything to the action. Where were the grand periods of Claudian, Brutus, and Clito? I missed them, and, under the privilege of old acquaintance, expressed a wish for even more than is given in the "Sign of the Cross."

"Oh, but I cut all the fine speeches," he informed me. "Once the public begin listening to the poetry, it is all up with the piece."

Alas, it is mostly so; I had to agree with him. This play must never be retouched, but stand, as it has won favour with the

great heart of the people. It is the outcome of deep feeling, the bitter sorrow of domestic loss that so often nerves us to our highest effort. It is true, we have not here absolute perfection ; but that supreme gift is desired by very few among the mixed multitude who confer the honours of success. In spoken language, many things count before the merit of faultless expression ; this being given, if the dramatic form and spirit be lacking, goes for nothing in the general ear. How to reach that, Mr. Wilson Barrett knows exactly ; what elocution may miss is attained by speaking to the eye and by the magnetic flash of sympathy. The imperious exaction of a British audience is not forgotten. We have, within due limits, the indispensable note of laughter supplied by a drunken patrician, an apt type of Nero's companions, represented with much humour and tact by Mr. Ambrose Manning. He deals very faithfully with the New Woman as she flourished under the Cæsars.

Two fine impersonations are the Poppæa of Miss Grace Warner and the Nero of Mr. Franklyn McLeay. The beautiful, corrupt woman as she came down to us in marble, with her almost childlike grace and charm of feminine features, that could mask so much of shame and cruelty. Nero, realized to us here as a very dream of horrors, the incarnation of a youth effete with the crimes of a perishing civilization, haggard and wrinkled, with every vile appetite sated, the image of a living death. As we know, his thirtieth year brought the end to this Imperial monster, unfit to exist amongst mankind. Here he moves before us as he was, hideous, cruel, the persecutor, yet not without some last sparks of the mercy that dies so hard in the human breast ; we behold the man, the mortal divinity, the everlasting reproach of Imperial Rome. In sharpest contrast to the august couple stands Mercia, the virgin-martyr, so feelingly present with us in the willowy form and inspired features of Miss Maud Jeffries.

Altogether it is a memorable departure in the history of the stage when we find so excellent a cast, each individual fitted into the groove as if the author had framed his characters with their appointed representatives constantly in his eye ; this play, be it remembered, not having been produced after the approved fashion of the dramatic author in our London theatres, which submits the choice of artists to the writer himself—at least, to a considerable

extent—from among the very pick and flower of the dramatic profession.

Mr. Wilson Barrett had to deal with the loyal band of men and women he has gathered about him as his workmates; they brought with them no world-wide reputations to support his venture, only the talents developed under his hands in their laborious rehearsals and training, along with the steadiness and smoothness of a company long accustomed to act together, qualities that often count for more than many brilliant gifts towards the attainment of a perfect *ensemble*. Moreover, the "Sign of the Cross" is no one part piece. Marcus Superbus, it is true, always comes on at the right moment for masterly effect in the acted story. The situation at the end of most of the leading scenes belongs to him, but with notable exceptions. Three or four fellow-artistes, at least, have been generously afforded the golden opportunity to make their mark as a valuable infusion of fresh blood into the ranks of the London stage.

The sum of all is, the actor-author now stands a conqueror, to whom the honours of a triumph are decreed after many a hard battle fought, after many a rally from defeat, through the old British pluck that never knows when it is beaten. In this author's dictionary there is no such word as "fail," even in the highest walk of the poetic drama. Fame, fortune, ay, almost his daily bread, has he staked upon the noble issue—and won. America and the provinces have already given the verdict which our eyes and lips confirm. By our spiritual teachers his work is countenanced, his hands are strengthened. He has found the secret of combining the attractions that take hold of the general ear with the one touch that stirs some good, we would hope, to be found in all humanity. What of the objectors?

These will be found among the two extremes of the utterly worldly and the "unco guid," the conscientious, honest irreconcilables who would divorce the tragic muse from their religion and dismiss her to the nethermost pit as an unconverted pagan. It is only by a beautiful inconsistency that this class tolerates even the reading of Shakespeare, an actor of actors, whose work could never have been accomplished in the Puritan closet. Then we have the people of this world, who dislike to be followed in their amusements by any recollections of such unpleasing things as Christianity, pain and self-sacrifice in the cause of God. But

the enemies come in, and swell the nightly crowds ; the notes of discord only serve to exalt the general chorus of admiration. There are none to damn with faint praise. With this class of art there is no medium ; we must love or hate.

By no means can we call the result flawless ; the divine theme is in human hands only, not written large, as in history, by the very finger of God. But the " Sign of the Cross " is singularly exempt from all offence. If we were to note a defect, we should find it in the somewhat monotonous character of the music. Solemn Gregorian chants possess us with their weird devotional thrill ; their power would be greatly enhanced by strong contrast. We miss the lilt and charm of the bright mission songs so favoured by our popular preachers, and which, no doubt, had their counterpart in the psalms sung with " a merrye heart " by these early believers, who received the glad tidings of great joy with the ardour of a first love. Above all, we seem to desire a soul-stirring strain as the triumphal march of the Christians to the gates of death, that consummation most to be desired as the only deliverance from the miseries of this world under Nero's tyranny.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS.

A dream of shadows blent with hope divine
Beyond the vision of the heart's desire ;
The cross of shame exalted as the sign
Of triumph to the martyrs proved by fire :
The sorer conflict when the Christian maid
Wakes the fierce passions of the Roman's breast,
And spurns the ravisher, though self-betrayed
By woman's dear relentings unconfessed ;
Repentance unto glory when his eyes
Behold her lapped in brightness from above,
And soul to soul is knit, by sacrifice
Made one, the eagle mated with the dove.
Through death's dark gate the love-note ringing fond
Whispers, " My bride, come to the light beyond."

Jimmy's Choice.

CHAPTER I.

"IT is most extraordinary, that is the third ornament that has been lost in the last fortnight ; last Tuesday and the Tuesday before that, and now this Tuesday. I cannot understand it. It is most annoying, and I must say it seems to me to be very suspicious. You really ought to do something, Arnold."

"What can I do more, mother ? I have put the affair into the hands of Mr. Spyer, the greatest detective of the age. We must wait for results."

"And meanwhile have the house stripped. Mr. Spyer, indeed ! It seems to me that he just does nothing for all he looks so wise. It is most annoying, I repeat. I would rather have lost any other ornament than that diamond peacock. Your poor father gave it to me on the day he led me to the altar ; nothing would have bought it from me, I prized it so much."

"I know, mother, how you prize it for the dead giver's sake. I assure you, you cannot be more annoyed than I am myself, and particularly that you should lose them while you are staying here."

"You do not suspect any of your servants of the theft ?"

"No ; as you know, the servants have been with me for some time. I could almost vouch for their honesty as for my own. Nothing has ever disappeared till lately."

"Who could it be ? For I am perfectly sure in my own mind that the things were stolen."

"Your own maid ?"

"What ! you do not mean to say, Arnold, that you think that Burdekin has anything to do with the thefts ? Why, the idea is perfectly preposterous. She has been with me fifteen years or more ; you might just as well say that I stole the things."

"I confess I feel puzzled, mother. The jewel-case is in Burdekin's charge ; she says she locked it in the safe as usual

when the ornaments had been replaced in their cases. How then could the jewels disappear without her knowledge ? ”

“ I do not know, but I am certain she is not the thief. If she were, why did she not take them before ? ”

“ Perhaps some sudden pressure may have assailed her. ”

“ Why do you make such a set upon poor Burdekin, Arnold ? You seem to think she has done it. ”

“ I do not wish to offend you, mother, and I am aware that Burdekin was an honest, faithful servant. ”

“ Was, Arnold ! ”

“ Yes, mother. Let me finish ; I say ‘ was ’ designedly. I believe that some sudden pressure caused her to take the things. ”

“ What makes you think that ? ”

“ Well, you see, had it been an ordinary thief, it is not likely that only one ornament would have been taken at a time. ”

“ Ah ! ”

“ Burglars generally make a clean sweep of the lot. ”

“ That is true. ”

“ Consequently it must have been some one well acquainted with your jewel-case and who had access to it who committed the robbery, some person in the house in fact. ”

“ And you think Burdekin is that person ? ”

“ I could not be absolutely certain without actual proof, but my suspicions point that way. Who else could it be ? Who had the same opportunities ? ”

If not convinced, at all events Mrs. Darrah was silenced. There was truth in what Arnold said: Burdekin had opportunities of purloining that nobody else in the house had, but why had she not done it before ? In her fifteen years’ service she had always been most exemplary up till now, her mistress was loath to believe evil of her, and yet her son’s words set her thinking. Burdekin had sole charge of the jewels. How was it, if, as she said, she locked them safely away in their receptacle, that on three separate occasions now when the cases were opened there was a jewel missing, and each time a valuable one ? No trace could be found of these jewels, though rewards had been offered, and on the last occasion, when the diamond peacock was missed, Arnold Darrah had put the matter in the hands of Mr. Spyer, the detective.

Mrs. Darrah was the widow of George Darrah, the senior

partner in the firm of Darrah, Endon & Co., wholesale merchants. Arnold Darrah had taken his father's place in the firm on the latter's death, so that Mrs. Darrah and her daughter sustained no pecuniary loss when the husband and father died, Arnold proving himself quite as good a man of business as Mr. Darrah, Senior, and under his guidance the firm prospered exceedingly. Arnold was thirty and unmarried when he thus stepped into his father's shoes.

It was of his own free will that he remained unmarried to this age. Many mothers in society with marriageable daughters would gladly have welcomed the rich merchant's son as a husband for one of their daughters, but he steered clear of all the traps laid to catch him, and went on his way alone.

The fact was, he had never really been in love. He had fancied he was more than once, but had managed to discover his mistake and pull up just in time.

The merchant's only daughter, Jemima, or "Jimmy" as she was familiarly known to her friends, was five years younger than her brother, and bore a strong resemblance to him in feature. She was above the average in height, slight, but muscular and wiry, and, rather to her mother's horror, excelled in many manly pursuits. She could row, shoot, ride straight to hounds, play cricket and football, cycle, and thoroughly disdained music, painting and the sister arts, which she dubbed effeminate. She cut her hair short, wore waistcoats and ties modelled on the style of her brother's, belonged to three or four women's clubs where the most advanced ideas were promulgated, and altogether tried her best to remedy nature's mistake in having made her a woman.

Poor Mrs. Darrah was aghast when Jimmy first took it into her head to discard veils, gloves, and feminine fripperies generally and ape the manners of the sterner sex; she almost tearfully complained to Arnold, who laughed at the recital of his sister's delinquencies. "Never mind, mother," he said soothingly. "It is only a passing fad. Jimmy will come to her senses before long, when the novelty has worn off."

"She has cut all her beautiful hair off."

"That is a pity; it is not irreparable, however, it will grow again."

"She wears divided skirts, and has ordered knickerbockers."

"Worse and worse," exclaimed Arnold, who could not refrain from laughing at his mother's doleful tones. "What next?"

"She smokes," in an awestruck voice. "Only fancy a woman smoking!"

"A good many of them do it now," Arnold said quietly; "it is no use trying to dissuade her from it at present. She will soon give it up when she finds how it discolours the teeth."

"I wish she would. Then she belongs to those horrid clubs. Why, at the Leviathan they want the total extinction of man."

"Don't they wish they may get it!" returned Arnold, laughing outright. "The total extinction of man means the total extinction of woman as well. You leave Jimmy alone, mother! When Mr. Right comes she will give up all these fads and fancies and settle down into a model wife and mother."

"I am sure I hope so," Mrs. Darrah said with a sigh. "Jimmy is rather a trial just now."

"There is no harm under all her eccentricity; it will find its level, mother, never fear."

But up to the present Jimmy seemed as much bent as ever upon pursuing her manly career.

It was some two years after his father's death that Arnold Darrah fell genuinely in love at last.

The girl he fell in love with was very unlike the women whom Jimmy admired and imitated.

Arnold Darrah could laugh indulgently at his sister's foibles, but her mannish friends found no favour in his sight. He would never dream of making a strong-minded woman his wife.

Enid Endon was the only child of his partner.

He had known her from a baby, and had petted her as such, without once thinking of falling in love with her till he suddenly awakened to the fact that this girl held his heart in thrall; that, she, and she only, was the one woman in the world for him.

What opened his eyes to the fact of his love was this: the families of Darrah and Endon were always friendly, and saw a good deal of each other. Arnold being fourteen years older than Enid, looked upon the latter as a child, and so she was in spite of her eighteen years. She was very fair and childish-looking, with wavy, golden hair, pink-and-white complexion, and slight, fairy-like figure. She was pretty in what Jimmy declared to be a doll-like fashion, and Miss Darrah was not

far wrong in this: Enid did resemble a wax doll in her fair prettiness.

In spite of her contempt, however, for Enid's delicate hands, tiny feet, and general shrinking from all manly pursuits, Jimmy, in her own way, was fond of the pretty little creature. She was sorry that Arnold had not chosen some one with more backbone and who would stand up for the rights of her sex, but as his fancy had fallen upon her, why, she would try to make the best of it and see if she could not inoculate Enid with some of her own ideas concerning the emancipation of women.

Miss Endon thought a great deal more of a new gown than of the wrongs woman endured at the hands of that monster man. The fit of her dresses and the cut of her shoes interested her a great deal more than lecturing from a platform or denouncing the other sex. She could not be brought to see that women had any wrongs at all.

This is scarcely to be wondered at, seeing that she had been petted and spoiled almost from her birth, and every wish of hers was gratified by her fond parents if they could possibly do so.

On her eighteenth birthday a grand ball was given by Mr. and Mrs. Endon to celebrate her coming out. No expense was spared to make the festivity befitting the occasion.

Of course, the Darrahs were invited. In deference to her mother's wish, Jimmy condescended to put on a ball gown instead of the cutaway coat and divided skirt which formed the orthodox evening costume of the members of the Leviathan Club; but, to use her own expression, she felt "like a fish out of water" in it, and longed for the time when she could doff it and resume her masculine attire. She disdained such a frivolous pastime as dancing. When she was tired of watching the gyrations of the donkeys, male and female, who could take pleasure in such a meaningless amusement, she retired to the refreshment room, and scandalized some old dowagers by calling for a brandy-and-soda and a cigar, which she proceeded to enjoy with evident gusto.

Arnold Darrah was one of those who did not despise dancing; he was a good waltzer, and really enjoyed it, especially when his partner was the heroine of the evening, fairy-like Enid Endon.

He had finished a dance with her, and was preparing to sit out the interval, when his intention was frustrated by a gentleman coming up and claiming her for the next dance.

Arnold would have remonstrated, as the music had not yet struck up; but Enid, hurriedly withdrawing her hand from his arm, placed it at once in that of the new-comer, and walked away with him, leaving Darrah rather astonished and put out.

He looked attentively at the man who had so unceremoniously deprived him of his partner.

He was a man about the middle size, rather elegant in appearance, with a handsome, dark face and peculiarly piercing eyes.

He bent over the fair girl at his side with a lover-like air that sent an angry thrill through Arnold's veins.

"Who was the fellow, and what was he, that he dared appropriate Enid Endon in such cool fashion?" he thought disgustedly; "he had never seen him before, and never wanted to again, confound his impudence!"

This incident opened Darrah's eyes to the state of his own feelings.

He had fallen in love with Enid Endon without knowing it.

He felt unreasonably angry with this stranger, and found himself watching him and his partner intently, quite forgetting that there were other girls to whom he was engaged for some of the following dances.

He could do nothing but think of Enid and follow her about. He was chagrined to find that she sat out two or three dances with this man, who seemed to have appropriated her to the exclusion of her other partners.

Impatiently Darrah waited till the next dance Enid had promised him, when he went up to her and claimed her.

She was rising to take Arnold's arm when the stranger said blandly, "This next dance is mine, Miss Endon."

Enid hesitated, looking helplessly from one to the other, when Arnold said warmly, "This dance is mine, as Miss Endon's programme will show."

"I—I have lost it," faltered the girl.

"Miss Endon promised me this dance," the stranger said, "but if she wishes to dance with you, why," with a shrug of his shoulders, "I will waive my claim."

"Miss Endon," Arnold said, "this dance is mine, is it not?"

"I do not think it is," she said in hesitating fashion. "I—I promised it to Mr. Jeckell."

With a smile of triumph, the man she called Mr. Jeckell drew

her arm through his own and went off with her, leaving Arnold nearly speechless with rage and amazement.

Miss Endon had certainly promised him the dance, but as she chose to prefer Jeckell, all he could do was to bow to her decision and swallow his disappointment as best he might.

But the incident had the effect of making him form the resolution that he would try and win Enid Endon for his wife, and that soon, ere others had the chance of plucking this fair flower.

CHAPTER II.

It was some little time before Arnold found an opportunity of speaking to Enid of what filled his heart and mind to the exclusion of every other subject.

Somehow he never seemed to get an opportunity of speaking to her alone. Hypolite Jeckell was as her shadow: wherever she went he seemed to be there too.

Arnold could not find out much about him except that he had come with a letter of recommendation from one of Endon's oldest friends. He was half French, which accounted for his outlandish christian name, and seemed to have plenty of money. Beyond this Darrah discovered nothing.

Arnold grew to hate the sight of him hovering about Enid, with his glittering eyes fixed upon hers, and his voice subdued to tender whispers as he talked to her.

Arnold would have experienced the greatest satisfaction in punching his head, but of course he could not relieve his feelings in this way, and the Frenchman was always studiously polite to him, though Darrah fancied that this studied politeness veiled his secret contempt.

So matters went on for some weeks, and then one day Arnold was overjoyed to find Enid alone.

In answer to his inquiries, she said that Mr. Jeckell had suddenly been called away by telegram, but she did not know whether his absence would be long or short.

Arnold devoutly hoped it would be long; he did not take much time to improve the shining hour. In fact, so well did he press his suit that before long he was Enid's affianced husband.

The match was cordially approved by both families, and there being no obstacles in the way, the marriage was fixed for an early date.

Arnold was so happy that the thought of Jeckell scarcely ever obtruded itself, but one day he did ask Enid what had made her give his dance to the Frenchman.

"But it was his: I had promised it to him," she said simply.

"You had promised it to me first," Arnold returned.

"Oh no; you mistake, Arnold," she said seriously, and nothing he could say would convince her to the contrary.

"Do you like this man, darling?" Arnold asked presently.

"I hardly know," she answered. "When he is near I feel drawn to him, but——"

"Well, Enid!"

"I feel a great relief when he is gone. I seem to breathe more freely, to be glad to be out of his presence."

"And one time, do you know, dearest, I feared that you might fall in love with him."

"Oh no," she said almost involuntarily, and with a half-frightened air. "I should not like to have to fall in love with him."

"What an odd way of putting it, darling!" Arnold said laughingly. "Do you think he could force you to fall in love with him? But," seeing a strange, apprehensive look on her fair face, "we will not talk of him any more, but of something pleasanter."

Arnold scarcely knew why, but he had an undefinable dread that Hypolite Jeckell might turn up and put some obstacle in the way of his marriage, so he hurried matters on, and there being no dissentients, one fine morning there was a grand wedding, and Enid became his wife with all the formalities of the law.

Spite of himself, Arnold Darrah felt a weight lifted from his mind now that the knot was tied, and no one could take Enid from him. He took her away for a long honeymoon, which they spent abroad, perfectly content with themselves and the whole world.

It was during their absence that Jeckell returned to England. He seemed perfectly amazed when he heard of the wedding, and not over well pleased at it either. In fact, Jimmy declared that his eyes shot lightning and fury when he was first told of it, but as he uttered his congratulations to the respective parents in the most dulcet tones, this was put down to romance on Jimmy's part and the avowed dislike she had for Hypolite.

"He is a snake," she said after she had first been introduced

to him, "a treacherous, crawling snake, that would leave his trail over any Eden. If I were a man he should not be admitted into any home-circle where I was master."

Jimmy's words were only laughed at, but it was strange that Jeckell always seemed to try and conciliate her, however contemptuous he might be towards other persons. But he received scant courtesy from Miss Darrah, who had a habit of saying disagreeable home-truths occasionally to those whom she disliked. After spending some happy months abroad Arnold brought his wife home to the beautiful place he had bought a little way in the country, for he rightly concluded that he would not ask his bride to share his mother's home.

Not that Mrs. Darrah senior was by any means a typical mother-in-law; she was very fond of her pretty daughter-in-law, and secretly wished that Jimmy resembled her more in her dainty feminine ways, but Arnold knew that it was better for a wife to be mistress of her own household, and as Enid preferred the country, and his mother the town, both were satisfied with the arrangement.

The relations were very cordial between the two houses. Enid would stay with her mother-in-law on long visits, and the latter was welcome at Arnold's for as long as she wished.

Nothing could have exceeded Jeckell's manner when he first met the Arnold Darrahs after their marriage; it was perfect. He congratulated them both, and expressed his regret that he did not know of it in time, as he would certainly have made a point of being at the ceremony. As it was, however, he hoped he was not too late to offer a present as a souvenir of the happy event, and he opened a case he carried and showed a magnificent serpent bracelet, the scales glittering with diamonds and emeralds.

"You will permit me, madam?" he said, advancing towards Enid, who shrank back with a half-appealing glance at her husband.

Arnold, however, did not notice it, and Hypolite, with his steely eyes fixed on hers, clasped the glittering bauble round her slender wrist. "I hope you will wear it, madam, sometimes, in memory of the donor." The last words were spoken so low that they did not reach Arnold's ears.

Enid murmured a few words of thanks, which Arnold seconded.

He would rather that the fellow had kept his present to himself, but he could not make a scene over such an ordinary affair as an acquaintance giving her a present on the occasion of her marriage, so he had to murmur thanks which he did not feel.

"Humph! Wonder why he chose a thing like that," said Jimmy in her downright fashion when the bracelet was shown to her; "it is pretty enough and costly enough I have no doubt, but it reminds me of him. It is too reptilian to please my fancy."

"I—I think so too. I wish he had not given it to me," said Enid, who was alone with her sister-in-law.

"Why did you not refuse it, then? You need not have taken it," said Jimmy.

"Oh, I could not do that."

"Why not?"

"I—I do not know."

"Enid," said Jimmy, looking at her earnestly, "I will return the bracelet; let me give it back to Mr. Jeckell."

"No, no."

"What is your reason? You do not care to take presents from that man? Arnold will have one made for you if you wish it; let me give it back."

"I—I dare not, Jimmy."

"Dare not?"

"No. I feel he would be angry if I did, and might work us harm."

"What a little silly you are, Enid! How could he work you harm? However, I suppose it is no use saying anything more to you; you must keep your uncanny ornament. If Arnold does not object, why should I?" with which philosophic expression Jimmy betook herself off to have a final cigarette before going to bed.

Enid was staying at her mother-in-law's when the bracelet was presented to her, but soon after that they all moved to Arnold's country house, and here a curious thing began. One after another the elder Mrs. Darrah's diamond ornaments disappeared in most mysterious fashion, without any one having the least clue as to who could possibly be the thief.

Arnold indeed was strongly inclined to believe that the hitherto irreproachable Burdekin must have some hand in the

matter, as she was the only person who had access to the jewels. But this belief was shaken when, in deference to Mr. Spyer's suggestion, Mrs. Darrah kept in her own possession the keys both of the jewel-case and safe, and yet the disappearance of the ornaments went on the same as before. Arnold assisted his mother to look over the contents of the cases, and saw them safely locked away in their receptacles; yet when a few days afterwards they were examined a diamond cross was missing. It was evident it could not be Burdekin this time. The whole family were nonplussed; it looked as though magic had something to do with it, for it appeared to be by no human agency that the jewels were spirited away.

Mr. Spyer had questioned the lady's-maid very closely as to where she had kept the keys and as to there being any likelihood of any one being able to get at them, but she stoutly asseverated that she had never let them out of her possession except to members of the family, Mrs. Darrah or her son and daughter, and the detective saw no reason to doubt her word.

Mr. Spyer did not like to own himself defeated by this mysterious thief, and mentally registered a vow that he would get to the bottom of the mystery. He requested Mrs. Darrah to send her remaining jewels to her bankers, but to leave the empty cases locked up in the safe, and not to mention even to any member of her family that she had done so.

The old lady was indignant at first. "Surely, Mr. Spyer," she said, "you do not mean to say that you suspect any member of my family?"

"My dear lady, I suspect no one at present," he replied suavely. "I may have a theory, but—you wish to stop the theft of your jewels. The way I suggest is the only way possible of doing that. Take them to-day; take them yourself into town to your bankers."

Mrs. Darrah was impressed by his manner. "It is so late," she objected feebly.

"But, dear madam, you can sleep at your own house," he returned.

"Very well. I suppose I must. I can call upon Arnold on my way to the bank."

"There can be no objection to your acquainting your son with the facts, but ask him not to mention it to any one else."

"I must take my maid with me."

"Of course, madam, but do not let her know that you carry the jewels."

Rather mystified, Mrs. Darrah obeyed. She could not understand the detective's object, and he would not enlighten her.

"Now the field is clear," the detective muttered to himself when Mrs. Darrah had departed; "and the telegram I sent will keep Mr. Darrah in town till late. There will be plenty of time to verify my suspicions. It is a queer case, very."

As he was passing along the hall he encountered Miss Darrah. He paused for a moment; then suddenly saying, "I'll do it; she's not one of your hysteric sort: her head's screwed on all right," he went after Jimmy, and requested her to give him a few moments' conversation.

"Certainly, Mr. Spyer," she answered readily. "Come in here to the library; we shall be safe from interruption there."

Mr. Spyer looked behind the curtains, and opened the door suddenly to see if any one was listening before he turned to the expectant Jimmy.

"You have something to tell me about the thief?" she said.

"Yes, Miss Darrah. I believe I have discovered that individual, but I shall be certain to-night."

"Who is it?"

"Miss Darrah, you must be prepared for a very great surprise. I will tell you, for I shall want your assistance in verifying my suspicions."

"Yes, yes; but who is it?" impatiently.

"Unless I make a great mistake, the thief will be found in the person of your sister-in-law, Mrs. Arnold Darrah."

At this astounding announcement Jimmy got up from her chair, and faced the detective with flaming eyes.

"Are you mad, Mr. Spyer, or have you been taking too much to drink?" she demanded haughtily.

"Neither, my dear young lady," he replied calmly. "I do not wonder at your astonishment. I could not bring myself to believe it at first, but now I do not think there is any doubt; anyway to-night will decide."

His quiet manner impressed Jimmy in spite of herself.

"Enid a thief! Impossible!" she cried.

The detective shrugged his shoulders.

"To-night will decide," he repeated.

"But why should she take them?" Jimmy went on desperately. "She has plenty of her own, and most of those will be hers one day, for I do not care for diamonds. I will *not* believe it. Arnold's wife a thief! The mere idea is too horrible to be entertained for an instant!"

"Miss Darrah," the detective said, "I told you because I should like your assistance. The jewels have disappeared every week on the same day. This is Tuesday; another would disappear to-night if I had not taken precautions to prevent it. Neither your mother nor your brother will be here this evening; I wished to have the coast clear. Now, cast your mind back to the last three Tuesdays. Did you notice anything peculiar about Mrs. Arnold on those days?"

"No," said Jimmy at first. "Stay, though," she added. "I remember she seemed drowsy and stupid after dinner, and went to lie down. I am almost sure it was on the Tuesday she did that."

"Just so; and she will do it again to-night. Now, Miss Darrah, I want you to tell me the moment she leaves the drawing-room. By the way, how long was she absent on those occasions?"

"About an hour and a half, I think; but once she did not return to the drawing-room at all."

"Well, I rely upon you to call me."

"I will do so, but I am sure you must make a mistake."

"Time will tell, Miss Darrah; till this evening, adieu. Of course, I need not impress upon you the necessity of keeping this an absolute secret from every one, more especially from your sister-in-law."

"I understand," Jimmy said coldly.

She did not, she would, not believe this horrible thing, yet she remembered now how Enid had made excuses for leaving the drawing-room on each succeeding Tuesday. The servants would be all downstairs at that time, so there would be no one to interfere, and it would not be thought strange if the mistress of the house should be seen coming out of her mother-in-law's room. Poor Arnold! What a terrible thing for him if this horrible allegation should prove true! Altogether Jimmy did not feel very comfortable when Mr. Spyer had left her.

CHAPTER III.

"HUSH! not a word, Miss Darrah; simply watch her movements."

It was the detective who spoke, and who laid a detaining hand upon Jimmy's wrist as she was about to rush after Enid to denounce her duplicity.

As Mr. Spyer had surmised she would, Mrs. Arnold Darrah had made some excuse for leaving her sister-in-law after dinner, whereupon the latter had summoned the detective.

Taking up their positions in the room where the diamond safe was, hidden behind some curtains, the strangely assorted pair waited. Jimmy, indeed, did not half like the job, but she was so certain that Mr. Spyer must be wrong that, for her brother's sake and also for that of Enid herself, she felt that this mystery must be cleared up.

They waited so long that she was beginning to think there was nothing in Mr. Spyer's suspicions, when she was horrified to see her sister-in-law glide into the room and go towards the safe, with the evident intention of opening it with the keys she held in her hand. It was then that Mr. Spyer restrained Jimmy from rushing forward.

Methodically Enid went about her work. She opened the safe with one key, and the jewel-case with another, and then singled out one of the cases. She opened this: it was empty; she opened a second and a third, with the same results. Then her calmness seemed to desert her, a troubled look spread over her fair face, her breathing grew hurried, and she rapidly opened the remaining cases, only to find them all minus their contents.

"What shall I do?" she murmured in troubled accents. "They must be here; he said so; he said I was to take one every week till they had all gone. But now somebody has taken them. What shall I say? He will be so angry, and he is terrible in his anger. I must obey him."

"What is she talking about?" whispered Jimmy excitedly to the detective. "What does she mean? And how strange she looks."

"It is as I suspected," answered Mr. Spyer. "Mrs. Arnold Darrah is not a free agent in what she is doing now. Come out into the room; she will not take any notice of us."

Wonderingly Jimmy obeyed. Mr. Spyer was quite right: Enid took not the slightest notice of them.

"What does it mean?" exclaimed Jimmy.

"It means that Mrs. Arnold Darrah is hypnotized. She is obeying suggestions of the person who hypnotized her. She has been put into a mesmeric sleep. When she awakes she will know nothing of what she has done. You look incredulous, Miss Darrah; but from the first I suspected something of the sort from the appearance of your sister-in-law's eyes. I had something to do with a remarkable case in France a little while ago. A man was murdered by a woman, but it was conclusively proved by the doctors that the woman was under hypnotic suggestion at the time. The man who hypnotized her had ordered her to kill this man, his rival, on a certain day and at a certain hour, and she obeyed implicitly without knowing that she did so. We may be thankful, Miss Darrah, that in this instance the suggestion has been confined to robbery, and not to personal violence."

"You mean——"

"That, had the hypnotizer ordered it, your brother would have been murdered by his wife, yet she would have been perfectly innocent to all intents and purposes; she would have known nothing about it."

"How horrible! What an escape Arnold may have had!"

"If it be as I suspect the hypnotizer would not stick at even that to accomplish his revenge."

"You suspect somebody?"

"Yes, Miss Darrah. There is only one man who is jealous of your brother's happiness. He was in love with Miss Endon."

"Ah, Mr. Jeckell."

"Yes. I think he had been experimenting in France, but I never could gather sufficient proofs to denounce him."

"What are you going to do now?"

"Follow Mrs. Arnold. See, she is putting back the cases. Most probably he is waiting somewhere near to take the diamonds from her."

"A thief?"

"Not in the way you mean, Miss Darrah. The diamonds are nothing to him; but it gratifies his thirst for revenge to think that he can cause your brother's wife to become one. I

daresay he meant one day to enlighten your brother as to his wife's thieving propensities, without, of course, explaining the cause. Think what a revenge that would have been for him."

"You are a clever man, Mr. Spyer," Jimmy said admiringly.

The detective smiled. "I daresay you all thought I was wasting my time. But now, action, Miss Darrah. We will follow your sister-in-law, but be careful that you do not wake her; it might be dangerous. Mr. Jeckell will do that, or if he should scent danger, and not appear, I think I could manage it myself. I experimented in France as well as Mr. Jeckell, and not without success."

Meanwhile Enid, still with that troubled look on her face, went down the stairs and passed through the conservatory on her way to the garden, the others following cautiously.

She went straight to an arbour, within which was a rustic seat, on which she immediately sank as if somewhat exhausted.

The detective and his companion hid themselves in the shrubbery and waited, but no one came, though Enid seemed very restless and evidently expected some one.

After about half an hour the detective whispered to Miss Darrah, "He will not come now; he has taken fright, or something has detained him. I think, with your permission, I will address her."

He went up to Enid, who seemed to be in a drowsy state, and made some passes before her face. Her eyes gradually closed, and she seemed to sleep.

Raising his finger warningly to Miss Darrah, who was an interested spectator, he said to the patient: "Who told you to steal those diamonds?"

"No one," Enid answered positively.

"Now, that will not do. Somebody suggested it to you. I order you to tell me."

There seemed to be a struggle going on in Enid's mind; the two opposing influences were at work. "It will depend upon which is the stronger," muttered the detective, and he made some more passes before her face. "Speak!" he commanded. "Who suggested it to you?"

"Mr. Jeckell," at last Enid said slowly and unwillingly.

"I have triumphed," cried the detective exultingly. "Those

visits to the Salpêtrière have borne fruit. Now to try and counteract his baleful influence. You were wrong," he continued, taking Enid's hand in his own. "Hypolite Jeckell is a bad man; he would ruin your happiness if he could. I command you to have nothing more to do with him, sleeping or waking. Do you hear?"

"I hear."

"And will you obey?"

"I will obey."

"Now, Miss Darrah," Spyer said, turning to the wondering girl, "to show you that there is something in hypnotic suggestion, will you suggest something that I shall ask your sister-in-law to do when she is awake to-morrow, a week hence, a month, or when you choose. If I order her now she will do it without knowing why she is impelled to do so."

Jimmy thought a moment; then she said, "Tell her to give me those two keys to-morrow at five minutes to twelve."

"Right!" answered the detective, and he gave the order. "By the way," he added, "how did you get those keys?"

"Mrs. Darrah sent me once for some of her jewels, and I took the impression in wax and gave it to Mr. Jeckell. He told me to."

"That explains how the keys were got. Now," turning to the patient, "go back to your room, and when you are awake come down to the drawing-room."

"I hear," responded Enid, and she rose and glided rather than walked back to the house, and ascended to her room.

"Now, Miss Darrah," the detective said, "we will await her coming in the drawing-room. In about half an hour she will be down."

Punctually to the half-hour Enid came down. She looked very pale, but her eyes had lost the curious expression which had struck Jimmy as being so strange. "Where have you been, Enid, all this time?" she asked.

"In my room."

"The whole time?"

"Yes. Do you know, I have been asleep. I still feel very sleepy."

"What made you come down, then?"

"I do not know; some irresistible impulse came over me the

moment I awoke. I felt I *must* come down to the drawing-room."

"Well, dear," Jimmy returned, "you look tired and sleepy now. Do you not think you ought to go to bed?"

"Yes, I am going. I only wanted to say good-night."

The next day Jimmy had another proof of the detective's power. At five minutes to twelve Enid came into her room.

"Look, Jimmy," she said, holding out the keys. "I have just found these keys in one of my drawers. They do not belong to me, and I do not know how they came there; I never saw them before."

"Give them to me, dear; I think they were lost some little time ago," Jimmy said as calmly as she could. Even her strong nerves were somewhat shaken by the occult power that could thus sway and dominate another's will.

"Oh, they are yours? But I wonder how they came to be in my drawer," Enid remarked in all sincerity.

"Accident, most probably. Do not think anything more about it, Enid; it is of no consequence," Miss Darrah answered soothingly.

Jimmy was rather in a perturbed state of mind. What ought she to do—acquaint Arnold with the facts, or let him remain in ignorance that his wife had innocently enacted the thief?

Duty seemed to point to the former, but she knew it would be a heavy blow to him, he adored his young wife so much.

At last she decided to consult the detective.

"I think I should not mention anything about it, Miss Darrah," he said; "it will only cause your brother much uneasiness and pain that he may be spared."

"But if this man should influence her again?"

"I do not think you need fear that. For the present his influence is counteracted, and—I know enough to make him leave the country. Far away he will not be able to dominate her will. I gather from what you said you would rather that this matter was kept quiet, but of course, if you wish otherwise, he can be prosecuted, but a jury might be sceptical; hypnotism is not much believed in in England."

"Oh, no. The publicity would kill Enid. At all events, that must be avoided. I suppose it is best that this should remain a secret between us."

"I think you have decided wisely, Miss Darrah. I chose you as my *confidante* because I knew you were strong-minded, and of this rest assured: I shall never try my power again over your sister-in-law; in all probability I shall never see her again. At all events, my services will not be wanted again with regard to Mr. Hypolite Jeckell. I mean to pay him one more visit."

"Ah, you mean to——"

"To make him disgorge the plunder, Miss Darrah. Your mother must have her jewels again, though I think they must come back as mysteriously as they were abstracted; those keys you have will come in handy for replacing the missing ornaments. I must count upon your help for this. Afterwards you can destroy the keys or keep them under safe ward, as you will, only it would not be a bad plan to persuade your mother to have fresh locks put upon the jewel-case and safe. Mr. Jeckell, having had the impression of the keys in wax, may have had more made. However, I do not think he will trouble any of your family again."

In deference to Jimmy's wish, one part of this programme was altered. About a month after Mr. Spyer had thrown up the case as hopeless the Darrahs, all except Jimmy of course, were one day astounded when a package arrived by registered post which on being opened proved to contain the missing diamond ornaments and a type-written letter to say that, seized by sudden remorse, the thief took that opportunity of restoring the jewels he had stolen, as he feared some innocent person might be accused of the theft.

This was more than a nine days' wonder, and every conjecture imaginable was hazarded except the real one.

Jimmy kept silence, but for many a long day after she watched her sister-in-law narrowly; but when months had passed, and Enid showed no trace of hypnotic seizure, she began to breathe more freely and feel that Mr. Spyer's word could be trusted. Indeed, when Enid's first baby came she felt that all her fears were at rest. The little stranger occupied her time to the exclusion of everything else save the love she bore her husband, which seemed to increase as the years rolled on.

Jimmy, as she watched their happiness, felt that she had chosen rightly when she had resolved to bury in silence the knowledge that had come to her through Mr. Spyer's agency.

Hypolite Jeckell disappeared without leaving one trace behind. Mr. Spyer had done his work effectually.

Jimmy occasionally smiled to herself when her mother expressed the great contempt she felt for those utterly useless members of the community, detectives in general, and more especially Mr. Spyer in particular.

A. M. JUDD.

Mrs. Greybrook's Fiance.

By RICHARD WARFIELD,

Author of "MRS. BARFIELD'S JEWELS," "A BURTON CRESCENT MYSTERY," etc.

CHAPTER I.

CRADLEMERE is a sleepy little place, half village, half town, in Lincolnshire. Strangers invariably dub it the dullest hole in England. And it is, no doubt, dull enough to those who are accustomed to the noise and bustle of a large city. But many of the people who live in Cradlemere think there is no other spot so fair on the earth's surface, and it would require a very big bribe to persuade these to move their goods and chattels elsewhere.

Miss Alicia Marsden was one of those who were of this way of thinking. She had been bred and born in Cradlemere, and never had she passed more than nine consecutive days and nights away from it; for, as she often said, "I'm never so happy as when in my own little home."

Although she had arrived at that time of life when she was fairly entitled to the appellation of "old maid," there was nothing of the conventional old maid about Miss Alicia. She beamed with kindness and good-nature; and one of her chief, and certainly un-old-maidish, delights was the bringing together of what she considered suitable couples. She was, in truth, an inveterate matchmaker. And if she made some mistakes in the performance of her self-apportioned duties, thereby earning for herself the anathemas of a few ill-yoked couples, she, on the other hand, gained the good word of many whom her endeavours had landed in a state of terrestrial bliss.

In appearance Miss Alicia was not pleasing. She was thin, sallow, and wizened, nor had her face one good feature. It was only her expression which redeemed her from absolute ugliness.

Let me introduce you to the little woman on a bright morning

in early June. The day was Saturday. Armed with a pair of immense garden scissors, she was busily engaged in cutting flowers for the decoration of the church vases. She worked briskly, and she talked to herself the while with equal briskness—a habit engendered of living so much alone.

"I don't care what anybody says," she thus mused aloud. "Mrs. Greybrook is the very wife for my nephew Anthony. A widow! Yes, of course, but what of that? Widows *should* make better wives than young girls. They have had experience in making a man comfortable and 'managing' him; and Anthony is the very man to require a tactful woman such as Lydia. We all know how excellently she kept old Greybrook in order, no light task, either. If he'd suspected that he was being 'managed,' he'd have been most obstreperous. Yes, I must sound Lydia." And Miss Alicia snipped off a rose with a determined air.

"Oh, dear Miss Marsden," cried a voice from the high-road, "what a delicious rose! Do give me it, there's a good creature. I do so love roses, and mine aren't half as handsome as yours."

"Come in, come in, my dear. You may have a basketful of roses, if you like. I was just thinking of you, and wondering why I had not seen you lately. Where have you been hiding yourself this fortnight past?"

"Oh! I've been away from home," Lydia Greybrook answered, shaking hands with her friend—"at Scarborough. You must have heard me speak of my friend Mrs. Dunderdale. No? Well, she married my husband's cousin, and she's been having a month at Scarborough with the children, and I've been staying with her. I returned last night."

"How very strange!" exclaimed Miss Alicia. "I wish I'd known you were going. My nephew Anthony is at Scarborough just now, and I could have done with an outing myself, and would have joined you. You did not happen to meet him, did you, my dear?"

"What is his last name?" inquired the widow. "I made several new acquaintances."

"Falkland—Anthony George Falkland."

"Then to be sure I did," cried the other, clapping her hands. "And is he really your nephew? How very funny! I *do* wish I'd known. We were very much together, he and I. Such a dear, charming fellow he is, too, but"—and Mrs. Greybrook shook

her head ominously—"I'm afraid he's a desperate flirt. The way—but no! I must not tell tales out of school."

"Oh! I'm sure you are wrong, Lydia," Miss Alicia hastened to say; "he's a very good, steady boy, full of high spirits and fun, and, perhaps, a little thoughtless, but a flirt? No, Anthony is not a flirt. Do you know, I was thinking just when you came up that he'd make you an excellent husband."

"Husband! For me?" cried the widow, throwing up her hands in mimic horror. "The idea of such a thing! Why, I wouldn't intrust my happiness to so frivolous a young man, if I loved him to distraction. He'd arouse my jealousy every five minutes; I should never know a moment's peace. Besides, you are too late with your suggestion. I'm already engaged. I've called on purpose to tell you and to receive your felicitations. But you must keep the matter a profound secret; I shall tell no one else in Cradlemere at present."

"Engaged! Oh! Lydia, how could you?" the old maid exclaimed as she saw the airy castles she had been fabricating crumble away in a moment under this stern touch of reality. "I had so set my mind on your marrying Anthony, I had even chosen your wedding gown."

"That was very thoughtful of you, dear," Mrs. Greybrook returned kindly, though inwardly convulsed with merriment, "but you were a trifle premature with your arrangements. If only you could see my darling, you would say, 'Oh! Lydia, I'm not surprised that you succumbed.' He's as handsome as a dream, so tall, so straight, so noble-looking! Yes," cried the widow, waxing eloquent, "as beautiful as a Greek god! Such eyes, such teeth, and oh! such a love of a moustache!"

"I'm ashamed of you, Lydia," replied Miss Alicia, by no means moved by the widow's panegyric of her lover. "You talk like a schoolgirl of sixteen. And pardon me for reminding you that 'a love of a moustache' is not a very secure foundation for marital happiness."

"Ah! but you haven't seen it—I mean him," proceeded Mrs. Greybrook rapturously. "You would forgive me, if you had."

Her eyes twinkled with fun as she spoke, and she looked ready to burst into uncontrollable laughter.

"I hope you'll let no one else hear you talk in this strain,"

said her friend, with some severity. "Other people might think you'd gone off your head."

"Let them; it would be matterless," responded the widow melodramatically. "But, of course, I shall speak to no one here but yourself about him. I told you as much. But I felt that I could unburden my heart to *you*."

When her visitor had gone, Miss Alicia sat down on a rustic bench and plunged into thought. She was one of those people on whom opposition acts as a goad; and if before Mrs. Greybrook's advent it had appeared a desirable thing to her that her nephew should marry the widow, it seemed doubly so now. She hated to be thwarted in her plans, more especially matrimonial ones. No qualm concerning the injury she contemplated doing to Mrs. Greybrook's fiancé deterred her, simply because she never gave the man a thought. He was entirely outside her calculations. She had, indeed, never asked his name.

"I will write to Anthony by this afternoon's post," she ruminated, "and insist that he pays me a visit at once. Scarborough is a dangerous place for an unsuspecting boy like him. Some odious minx may be catching him with her blandishments before he knows where he is. I consider those watering-places downright mantraps. And if only I can once get him here, I'll give him no rest till he proposes to Lydia. They're about an age, and the match would be an admirable one."

Meanwhile Mrs. Greybrook, carrying a basketful of choice roses, reached home, and having tastefully arranged the flowers about her sitting-room in large, earthenware bowls, sat down at her writing-table to indite a letter to her lover. She laughed much as her pen glided over the paper. She was, no doubt, giving him an account of her interview with Miss Alicia.

A few days later the two friends encountered each other in the village street.

"I've heard from Anthony since I saw you," said Miss Alicia. "He's coming to stay with me to-morrow. He writes that he's weary of Scarborough and its gaiety, and he'll be glad of a little quiet. Shall you not be pleased to see him again? If I see the least sign of the frivolity and flirtatiousness you spoke of, I shall give him a lecture."

"Don't be hard on him, poor boy," said the widow, with a smile. "Remember, he's only young. Yes, I shall be very glad

to renew my acquaintance with him. He's a most agreeable companion."

"He's quite old enough to know better than to play the fool," replied Miss Alicia, who on occasion could be very emphatic, "and I shall stand no nonsense from him." And the little old maid trotted off home in high good-humour. She was well aware that propinquity often works wonders in matters of the heart, and she hoped to arrange a daily intercourse between Lydia and Anthony.

In due course the young man arrived at Cradlemere, "handsomer than ever," as his biassed aunt declared; and a fine fuss she made of him. He really was a nephew of whom to be proud: a well-built, grand-looking fellow of three-and-twenty, tall and straight, lithe and lissom, the sort of youngster to be spoilt of woman and abhorred of man.

"Well, Anthony, and what did you think of my little Lydia?" Miss Alicia asked carelessly as she strolled by his side on the evening of his arrival, while he was enjoying his after-dinner smoke.

Her nephew adopted an interrogative air.

"'Your little Lydia'?" he slowly repeated. "Lydia who? I don't know whom you mean."

Miss Alicia bit her lip with vexation. It was very annoying that Mrs. Greybrook had made so small an impression on Anthony.

"Why, my friend Lydia Greybrook, of course," she answered. "Whom else should I mean? You were introduced to her at Scarborough, were you not? Did I not tell you in my letter that she lived at Cradlemere?"

"Oh! yes, the flighty widow. Well, I believe you did mention her. Is she really a great friend of yours? I am much surprised to hear it, aunt. She's scarcely good form, is she?"

"Flighty!" gasped Miss Alicia. "Did I hear you aright? Did you say *flighty*, Anthony?"

"Why, yes, I believe I did."

"But, my dear Anthony, she's so——"

"But, my dear aunt," broke in the young fellow, mimicking her awestruck tones, "the Mrs. Greybrook whom I met at Scarborough was decidedly a flighty person; her skittishness was——"

"Skittishness!"

Anthony George Falkland laughed aloud.

"I am afraid I have horrified you, auntie," he said.

"Very, *very* much," she confessed. "I have always regarded Lydia Greybrook as such a superior woman, as such an example to youthful widows in general. You must be aware, Anthony, that a young widow's position is a very precarious one. The eyes of the world, particularly of the feminine and unwedded world, are ever upon her. Her slightest social slip is regarded as a grave indiscretion. What is forgivable in an inexperienced girl is monstrous in a widow, youthful though she be. And I have always looked upon dear Lydia as being so unusually circumspect."

"I am very sorry to have said anything to alter your opinion, auntie."

"You have not altered it, my dear," was the unexpected reply. "I am sure you view Mrs. Greybrook through the eyes of some feminine disparager, who is, doubtless, jealous of her superior style and beauty. But oh! Anthony," unable to repress it any longer, "you have greatly disappointed me. I have so wished that you would fall in love with Lydia. My life is very lonely, my dear boy, and she is the ray of sunshine that brightens it most of all. She is like a daughter to me. Ever since her husband"—Anthony winced perceptibly, but his aunt was too preoccupied to notice it—"died, it has been the dream of my life that you and Lydia should meet and grow fond of one another."

"And do you really think, aunt, that I should be doing a wise thing in marrying a woman who at three-and-twenty years of age finds it necessary to paint her face and dye her hair?"

Miss Alicia was wroth, but she did not show it. "Mrs. Greybrook does neither," she responded quickly; "and I am certain, Anthony, that some hideous or designing creature has been setting you against her by vile calumnies. Beauty and innocence always have detractors."

"Aunt," said the boy suddenly, stooping down and kissing the old lady's furrowed cheek, "your plans are futile. I am already engaged to the brightest, fairest, most lov——"

"Stop your rhapsodies, Anthony," cried Miss Alicia somewhat sharply—she was, indeed, grievously disappointed—"and tell me where you met the lady who has thus entangled you."

“‘Entangled!’ That is a strong word to use. I met my future wife at Scarborough.”

“I *knew* it,” said Miss Alicia with conviction. “No man is safe from the brazen hussies who frequent those seaside resorts. I wish I’d been with you; I’d have warned you of their specious allurements and guarded you. Who and what is this woman, Anthony?”

“She is a dear, charming girl, a widow——”

“Say no more, Anthony,” cried the old maid fiercely, every ribbon on her cap shaking with indignation; “I have heard enough. *All* widows are designing.”

“Even your friend Mrs. Greybrook?” laughed Anthony.

And, with this parting shot, he ran into the house, leaving his aunt to digest his unpleasant news as best she might.

CHAPTER II.

“TOL-DE-ROL, tol-de-rol,” sang the widow, as, watering-can in hand, she bent over a pot of maidenhair fern, “tol-de-rol, tol-de-rol, da, da!”

She was a very pretty woman, this Lydia Greybrook, a fair-haired, fair-skinned, blue-eyed creature, full of sparkle and vivacity; and just now she looked her very best, for the light of a sweet expectancy shone in her eyes, the light of a newly-born love.

“There,” she said, putting down the watering-can, “I think that will do for to-day.” And even as she spoke a firm tread sounded on the gravel path without. Casting one hasty glance towards a mirror, she went smiling to the door-window to meet the new-comer.

“Lydia darling!”

“My dear, *dear* Anthony!”

A whole dictionaryful of words could not have expressed more than these two short sentences.

After the lovers had conversed about their own affairs for a little while, they began to talk of Miss Alicia.

“I wish, Anthony dear,” said the widow, “that we’d never begun to deceive your aunt. The poor thing is making such a trouble of our obstinacy in not falling in love with one another.”

“We?” repeated Anthony; “say ‘I,’ Lydia. It was you who set the ball a-rolling. Did you not write me a long letter saying what you’d done, and asking me to back you up in it?”

"Just like a man to throw all the blame on a woman," cried Mrs. Greybrook, "but what if I did? Was it not your duty to sternly refuse to aid and abet me in such a deception? What's the good of a man who always lets a woman have her own way? You ought to have pointed out to me the folly of which I had been guilty, not to have encouraged me in it."

"That's all very fine, Lydia," grumbled Anthony, "but you know you're always hateful when I won't do exactly as you wish. What first made you think of deceiving auntie?"

"Why," returned the little widow, laughing at the remembrance of the interview with Miss Alicia, "I went down to her house on purpose to tell her of our engagement, but long before I had screwed up my courage to the necessary pitch she began to say how very much she wanted us to make a match of it. Then the idea of having a game with her entered my brain. And oh! Anthony, the character I gave you was too awful."

"Never mind," the young man replied complacently. "I had to colour you pretty well, you know. It was only tit for tat."

"What did you say about me?" asked Mrs. Greybrook, burning with feminine curiosity.

"I'm sure I don't recollect," he replied, "lots of nonsense. I know I said you were flighty and skittish."

The widow laughed.

"Well, auntie could put up with that pretty fairly, but when I insinuated that you dyed your hair and painted your face—— Good gracious! Lydia, what's the matter?"

"The matter!" shrieked the widow, springing up from her lover's side and glaring angrily down upon him. "You dare to ask me what's the matter? You dare to sit gaping there and admit that you said I dyed my hair and painted my face? You dare to do this, Anthony George Falkland?"

"My dear Lydia, do be reasonable. I only suggested that you——"

"Suggested!" cried Mrs. Greybrook scornfully. "Don't palter with me, sir. Did you or did you not——"

"Oh! hang it all, Lydia!" said Anthony, also losing his temper, "I did say it, and I believe it's the truth, so there!"

"Wretch!" pointing to the open window; "go, never let me see your face again."

"I never will," cried the young man wrathfully; "you may

depend upon that ; but before I leave you for ever let me tell you a bit of my mind, and that is that if you had not befooled my aunt for your own amusement, this would not have happened."

"I'm very glad it *has* happened," cried the widow. "I have learnt your true character in time." Then her feelings overcame her, and she sank on to the sofa in a hysterical attack. Anthony rang the bell for her maid and left the house, anathematizing his folly in having ever agreed to Mrs. Greybrook's plan of deceiving his aunt. "I will go at once to tell her the truth," thought the young fellow, "or some fresh complication may be arising."

Poor Anthony ! It had already arisen.

No sooner had Anthony quitted the widow's domain than Miss Alicia Marsden emerged from behind a laurel-bush that was planted very near to the sitting-room window. It was quite plain that she was in a state of high glee, and she chuckled audibly as she walked down the path to the garden-gate.

"I'll teach these young people a lesson," she told herself. "What a foolish boy and girl, to be sure ! All right, my young friends, three can play at your game."

I must do Miss Alicia the justice to say that she had not intended to play the part of eavesdropper. She had done it, as it were, involuntarily. Had not the lovers been so busily engaged, they must have heard her approaching. When she discovered who it was that was talking to Mrs. Greybrook, she had not liked to interrupt the *tête-à-tête*, and was on the point of retracing her steps when the sound of her own name arrested her notice. Without a second's consideration she slipped behind the laurel-bush and heard all that passed in the sitting-room. Possibly, had she had time for reflection, she would not have pursued so equivocal a course.

When Miss Alicia reached home Anthony was still absent, so she had plenty of time to mature her plans of reprisal. Indeed, the poor fellow did not put in an appearance for many hours. His aunt was beginning to feel really anxious about him, when his step sounded in the hall. He looked wretchedly ill and woebegone. By this time his ire had cooled down, and he was already admitting to himself that he had been an ass and trying to contemplate calmly what the remainder of his life would be like without his Lydia by his side, for that she would forgive him

never entered his head. In his imagination nothing but a vista of dreary years stretched out before him.

"My dear boy, how ill you look," said Miss Alicia solicitously. "Is anything the matter?"

"I don't feel very first-rate," he allowed. "I fear I shall have to leave Cradlemere to-morrow, aunt."

"Have you had some bad news?" she asked.

"No—yes—no—that is——"

"Ah! Anthony," she interrupted, "I'm sure you have, and I can sympathize with you, nephew, for while you've been out I, too, have had a great, I may say a most severe, shock."

"Yes?" said Anthony indifferently.

"I thought," proceeded Miss Alicia, "that Lydia Greybrook was such a superior woman, altogether above the usual vanities and follies of her sex, and I now find"—Anthony, who had pricked up his ears at the widow's name, was now attentively listening—"that she is no better than the generality of her sisters, that she is shallow, frivolous, and deceptive. I can never be too thankful, my dear boy, that you have escaped the very fate I was planning for you. Anthony," wound up the old maid with great impressiveness, "you were right: she both dyes and paints."

"No, no, aunt," quickly replied the repentant Anthony; "I am quite willing to believe I made a mistake. I——"

"She *does*," Miss Alicia interposed; "I am sure of it. Did I not myself see her purchasing a bottle of aureoline, which she hid beneath her cloak when she perceived me? Did I not see the flush of conscious guilt mantle in her cheek? Anthony, I have been deceived in that woman; she is a fraud."

Poor Anthony! What to say he did not know. To have Lydia—alas! *his* Lydia no longer—thus attacked and be by his former opinion of her debarred from entering on a defence was a position on which he had not calculated. A feeble attempt to exonerate her, however, he did make, but it was no use. His aunt was now as stubbornly set against the widow as she had erewhile been prepossessed in her favour.

"I admire you for standing up for the woman, disgraceful creature though she is," she said, "for it proves that you have a chivalrous nature. But it is no good, Anthony; my mind is made up."

"I think you are rather hard on Mrs. Greybrook, auntie."

"Anthony," Miss Alicia answered, with solemn emphasis, "I believe that you have seen the woman since you have been here, and that she has cast one of her siren spells over you. Yes, I am certain of it," narrowly observing the young man's conscious look, "and I am ashamed of you, nephew. Only the day before yesterday you described Mrs. Greybrook to me as 'flighty' and 'skittish,' two most undesirable adjectives when applied to any woman, and to-day you——"

But Anthony George Falkland jumped up, and incontinently fled,

Mrs. Greybrook, meanwhile, with floods of tears, had deeply repented of her hasty conduct of the morning. She was greatly attached to her lover, and she feared lest he should never return. She allowed to herself that she was solely to blame, but I do not think that under any circumstances she would have confessed as much to Anthony.

About 7 p.m. she sallied forth with the intention of going straight to Miss Alicia and admitting her fault, and begging forgiveness; and there is no doubt she would have put her resolve into practice had she not encountered Anthony on the way. She bowed coldly, and made a feint of passing on, but the poor boy was too miserable to stand longer on his dignity, and took her not unwilling hand, saying:

"Lydia, my dear one, do forgive me! The fault was wholly mine. Please forget our little disagreement."

After some show of reluctance the widow pardoned him, but it was necessary to put him to the test to see whether he were in a state of proper subjugation, so she stipulated that he should make a clean breast of the whole affair to Miss Alicia, taking the entire blame on to his own shoulders.

Then Anthony had perforce to tell her how his aunt had changed in her views regarding her.

The widow was dumbfounded.

"Do you mean to say, Anthony," she demanded, "that Miss Marsden positively told you that she saw me buy a bottle of hair-dye and put it under my cloak? Such an assertion is monstrous."

"She certainly said so, Lydia."

"I shall go to her instantly," cried Mrs. Greybrook excitedly, "to ask for an explanation."

"All right ; I'll wait here," Anthony rejoined.

"Indeed, you'll do nothing of the kind. You'll accompany me. I'll have no shirking, sir."

And Anthony had to go.

Miss Alicia was sitting by the window, calmly reading, when Mrs. Greybrook, followed by the unfortunate Anthony, bounced into the room, without announcement of any kind.

"I'm very glad to see you, dear," said Miss Alicia, rising and cordially shaking her hand. "I'm just in the humour for a nice cosy chat."

Thoroughly taken aback by her greeting, the widow was absolutely tongue-tied.

"What's the matter, dear?" asked the old maid.

Mrs. Greybrook, for once in her life, acted with great wisdom. She sat down, and began to cry. Anthony displayed equal sapience. He left the ladies, and went for a smoke in the garden.

"Never mind, Lydia," said Miss Alicia, stroking the widow's golden tresses. "I know all about it, my dear. You're a couple of foolish young people."

And then the dear old lady went on to say how she had accidentally discovered the trick that they had played her, and how she had determined to retaliate.

"And did you really tell Anthony that you saw me buy a bottle of hair-dye?" sobbed the widow. "It was too unkind, if you did."

"No, Lydia," responded Miss Alicia ; "but I implied it. I said, 'Did I not myself see her purchasing,' etc. You must allow there is a difference."

Mrs. Greybrook was too happy to demur ; and Anthony having been called in from the garden, the young people received a severe lecture on the idiocy of practical joking, which ended, as gay-hearted a trio sat down to supper as had ever been at once assembled beneath Miss Alicia's roof.

Corners of Life.

By R. M. BURNAND.

EDYTHER LOVELL (aged 25).—MRS. LOVELL (her mother).

(Afternoon in a country house.)

MRS. L. *(after a pause)*. My dear Edythe, what are you going to wear to-night?

EDYTHER *(wearily)*. I haven't thought. Rags for choice.

MRS. L. Don't talk nonsense.

EDYTHER. Well, mother, they would create a sensation, probably be most effective.

MRS. L. You know quite well why I am so particular about your appearance.

EDYTHER. Oh yes. I suppose you imagine Mr. McFurley is going to—to do me the honour to throw his handkerchief; it should be an embroidered silk one at least.

MRS. L. And you ought to consider yourself very fortunate. A man with £20,000 a year does not appear every day.

EDYTHER. No, true. He is a meteor flashing across my horizon, and, if I don't seize on him while he is coruscating, he will vanish into space, and I shall be—well—where I was before.

MRS. L. *(annoyed)*. You are utterly impracticable. Here you have the chance of settling yourself handsomely, and yet you hesitate in this frivolous manner, whilst some other more sensible girl will step in.

EDYTHER. And I shall have to throw the slippers and rice. Beautiful contrariness of life! *(Pulls a flower out of vase; to herself)* Why hasn't Giles written for so long? But there seems no chance of his succeeding; I am afraid things look hopelessly dark still.

MRS. L. And you make it still more contrary to me; we are poor.

EDYTHER. That was why I suggested rags—King Cophetua and the beggar maid, tableau complete.

MRS. L. Really, Edythe, you are almost vulgarly sentimental. I can't think from whom you acquire it.

EDYTHER. Some distant ancestor may have left a small legacy of useless feeling to be showered on some unfortunate descendants. I don't believe any Lovell ever had much else to bequeath.

MRS. L. (*prosaically*). No, the Lovells were decidedly poor and romantic, a most improvident and unpractical family. But this has nothing to do with the question. Mr. McFurley is giving this ball to-night, and from his manner and (*vaguely*) general little understandings I am certain he means to propose to you, Edythe.

EDYTHER (*narrowing her eyes*). And I suppose you want to know what answer I am going to give?

MRS. L. Certainly!

EDYTHER. That's an impossibility; no one can tell what a woman will say, not even herself.

MRS. L. But you have given him encouragement.

EDYTHER (*flushing*). Mother, you mean you invited him and did the encouragement for me.

MRS. L. (*a little embarrassed*). Well, one has a duty to do for one's daughter.

EDYTHER. And that duty is to try and persuade a girl to sell herself.

MRS. L. How tragic you are! One would imagine you lived in an Adelphi drama.

EDYTHER (*rising*). Mother, dear, don't say any more about it. I have no doubt I shall not disappoint you—in time.

MRS. L. I am sure you will not. I must go and see Stephens about some alterations. (*As she goes, to herself*) I hope Giles Armstrong won't be there to-night.

EDYTHER (*looking out quietly*). Oh, Giles, if you could only be there to save me from myself? He said he would be up for the 12th, by which time he would know about some appointment. It is now a week past, and he hasn't written. I am beginning to be down-hearted and nervous, and feel as if fate were thrusting me into a bondage I despise. No; I will be plucky yet. But, poor mother, what a downfall, £500 a year, probably out in Ceylon, *versus* £20,000 per annum and a good establishment in England! I am afraid I am not so fashionable as I once imagined. Somehow

I find I can not say good-bye to Giles, not for all the luxury that is almost in my grasp. I do hope I shall see him to-night. I cannot keep old McFurley off any longer. He has been an excellent shield during the season, and Giles quite liked him, I can't think why; he was positively mysterious about it, I remember. Mother was so happy to find her daughter apparently going to be practical. Poor thing, I shall have to make a bolt of it; she will never stand an orthodox wedding for a mere £500 a year and Ceylon——

(Enter Stephens.)

STEPHENS. Please, miss, a letter by 'and. And which dress shall I put out?

EDYTHER *(quietly)*. Thanks, Stephens. Oh, the yellow will do. *(Exit S.)* From Giles at last *(excitedly)*; he is coming to-night—stopping with the Anstruthers, and—splendid news! *(Reads more closely)* No, never! What a strange thing! Oh, I am madly glad. Scotch air is decidedly exhilarating. *(Re-enter Stephens.)* After all, Stephens, I think I will wear my new white satin; my yellow has got a bit dowdy.

STEPHENS *(unmoved)*. Yes, miss. *(To herself)* Some one is to be at the party to-night. I wonder how her old skinflint mother will like it.

* * * * *

(After the ball, 4 a.m.)

MRS. L. *(to Edythe, who is brushing her hair)*. Well, Edythe, are things settled? I saw you and our host wander in the conservatory.

EDYTHER *(half smiling)*. Yes, mother, everything is settled. You can order the trousseau.

MRS. L. My dearest Edythe, I am simply delighted. *(Kisses her.)* Mr. McFurley will make a——

EDYTHER. A charming best man if he likes.

MRS. L. *(paling under her powder)*. You don't mean to say that.

EDYTHER. Yes, I do, that I refused Mr. McFurley, but am going to marry Giles Armstrong.

MRS. L. Giles! A mere pauper!

EDYTHER *(looking at her mother)*. No, mother, not quite so low in the social scale, thanks to Mr. McFurley's interest and advice on speculations.

MRS. L. Thanks to Mr. McFurley! (*Gasps and falls into a chair*).

EDYTHER (*radiantly*). All's fair in love, you know, and Giles wisely made use of the man who wanted to step into his shoes. I don't think our host will break his heart (*smiling*), though he looked a bit queer when, after refusing him, I told him he had made me very, very happy. I am certain he considers me a wild lunatic; he is probably thinking it over now, but he won't find the solution till to-morrow. Don't look so sad, mother; I never could be very practical, but I am going to settle.

MRS. L. (*hopelessly*). I suppose I must make the best of it; but it is a sad disappointment. Why did you take after the romantic Lovells? Good-night! (*Goes out sadly meditating whether it is worth a big wedding or not.*)

A Life Redeemed.

By JAN CLAES.

ON the eve of leaving England for ever, I feel bound to make this confession, which I intend to publish, partly as a reparation to several who suffered annoyance, and even loss of money and of confidence through my escapade, and partly in hopes that he whom I love will read this and understand.

Twelve years ago, I, Martha Greany, was "doing" six weeks in Lipville Jail. Not the first either, by any means. For the sixth time within one year I had stood before the magistrate and heard his solemn warning that I was going the road to the gallows.

He was a fiery little man ; and I was "a rare bad lot," as the constable who gave me in charge declared. For when the magistrate sentenced me, I laughed ; it looked all so like a Punch and Judy show, but infinitely more comical.

Perhaps—I have often thought so since—if, on my first conviction for taking one shilling lying forgotten on the counter of a shop, some one had stepped forward and paid the half-guinea fine and costs, I might have been a better woman, for I never stole after that. But on the face of this earth I knew of no one to whom I could appeal, and, as I found the inside of the jail far more pleasant than I expected, why, the devilry within me had no more check.

But my worst deeds were of a rowdy character: fighting, breaking windows, &c. ; and it was clearly probable that Her Majesty's prison would be my permanent domicile.

I had one redeeming quality, bad as I was: I was thoroughly and scrupulously neat and clean, and likely enough the fresh cleanliness of the jail made it so pleasant to me. Food was just as good, and the work less hard than that to which I was accustomed.

Besides, the matron was such a jolly little body, with sharp eyes, and sharper tongue perhaps, but out-and-out fair in her dealings with us. She soon picked me out to wait on her per-

sonally, and I do believe she was glad to see me come back. Though she straightened her face and pretended to be shocked, I knew by the light in her bonny brown eyes that I was welcome.

I never thought about running away, no doubt because my time was always short, and I knew that it was an impossible feat, which had never succeeded in Lipville Jail, but above all because I felt far more comfortable under the orderly system than in the filthy slums that had ever been my home.

I was not of a religious turn of mind ; the number of prisoners whom I had met, and who would mix up the Bible with their loose talk, had quite stifled out any idea of another and a better world ; and the chaplain soon had given me up as a hopeless subject.

Even dear Miss Vansittart, the daughter of the biggest nob of Lipville, who had taken to doing good, and used to come once every month to preach at us and listen to our doubts and troubles,—even she had ceased to hope so far as I was concerned ; for, as sure as she began, I would look straight into her pale blue eyes and have her laughing in no time.

My time would be up in one short week, and as on this hot July day Miss Vansittart was coming her usual round, I had made up my mind to ask her, who was really all kindness, to give me a helping hand to begin a better life.

There was no sentimentality in this resolution, simply an abhorrence of the slum wherein alone I could find shelter.

My turn to speak with her had not yet come when a violent thunderstorm broke over the town ; hail and rain added to the general uproar, and Miss Vansittart being awfully frightened, there was nothing left for her to do but divest herself of her cloak and bonnet and remain "in durance vile," as she laughingly called it, until the storm was over.

Thunder and lightning had no terrors for me ; while all the other women were in their cells, I made tea for the matron, and every now and again mopped up the front step, which was being flooded by the violent downpour.

After I had waited on the matron and her visitor, I knew I should not be wanted for some time, and I turned into the pantry to "enjoy" my prison fare.

What was it then that made me look at the visitor's cloak and bonnet ? Did I wonder perhaps at the need of their being

the same as worn by hospital nurses? What made me try them on, taking off my prison cap and tying the bonnet strings with deliberate care?

Some latent devilry generated by the hurly-burly in the air must have possessed me, for, slowly buttoning up the mantle and drawing the short veil over my face, I quietly walked out and across the yard.

Something told me that now I was in for a longer stay in jail after this, and the very thought pleased me and urged me on.

The officer at the gate had not yet lighted up when I stood waiting for him to unlock it.

"A wet night, Miss Vansittart!" he said, respectfully touching his cap.

"So very wet indeed, sir." I lisped in perfect imitation; for our visitor was the most easily mimicked creature who ever came across the prison threshold.

Just a stretch of forty yards to the outer gate, in front of the governor's windows. Would I do them all before they caught me? I even lingered a little to give them a chance.

But I had passed out unmolested, and once in the street freedom seemed to fill me with a frenzied wish to give them all a good chase.

To the river then I, who had never in my eighteen years trusted myself to its swaying bosom, sped on as if there alone could be safety. It was getting all too exciting.

In a very few minutes I was at the wharf, where a man was calling out:

"Return passengers for Eastville and Deerville! Hurry up here for returns to Eastville *and* Deerville. Now, miss, a little sharper, please; we can't lose the tide. Time's up."

Of course I stepped along the gangway and walked steadily to the darkest end. Even if they did not catch me before the boat started they'd be waiting for me at the other landing stage. My! what a race they must be having! I felt quite excited at the thought, and wondered how many weeks I should get for this.

"A rare bad lot." And so I was, but I did not look it in my nurse's attire, for a sailor came up, and, pointing to a seat in a tiny nook, said, raising his cap:

"You'd be more comfortable here, miss, better than on that there coil of rope. There'll be a rough lot aboard, but we

generally keep this end for the quiet people. I'll see after you when we get to Deerville."

What a mighty thing is dress! How would that polite sailor laddie have spoken to me had some power whipped away my borrowed plumes and shown me in my true colours, with the broad arrow scattered all over my dress?

The boat was moving off, and they had not come up to me yet; so far I had won the race, and I deliberately put away all thoughts of "after,"—the present was quite enough. There was not the smallest loophole of hope; the prison clothes would drag me back there. So I enjoyed the swift gliding motion; and as the clouds rolled away, and faint stars began to glimmer and twinkle, I felt all the beauty of the scene, and shuddered at the mental picture I had of my home in the slums. Even the clean, orderly prison seemed cold and repellent by the light of that glorious, star-spangled dome.

But my thoughts were suddenly stopped by a voice that I seemed to know. Peering into the gloom on the right of me, I made out, bit by bit, a young girl seated beside a man on the very coil of rope I had vacated.

His was the voice that had startled me; he was fondling a fair-haired, blue-eyed doll of a girl, who seemed to be in the seventh heaven of delight. But his words struck me as very odd.

"Mind you give him only a little at a time, Elsie," he was saying; "and when he is asleep put a light in the window nearest the yew-tree, and I will come then. I shall wait from ten o'clock. But mind, not more than a teaspoonful."

"But, Jasper, can't you manage to meet me otherwise?" she expostulated; "I somehow don't like putting anything in father's drink."

"My dear, you can't help yourself, you know; I have hypnotized you, and I could make you do it without telling you. But I am sure you love me too much to refuse, and if your father won't allow me to speak to you, well, we must do all we can to outwit him. There are the lights, Elsie; so till ten to-night good-bye. Now, here's the powder; be very careful, only one spoonful to-night. Remember, I've hypnotized you, and you must obey."

The little fool no doubt believed that nonsense, for she meekly

took the small paper packet he gave her and slipped it into her pocket.

I knew the man now; Jasper Markham, medical student at the hospital, about the most villainous cur that walked the streets. I owed him a grudge, too. I had seen him kick a poor old man out of the room when he begged to look once more on the face of his dead boy. I would repay that kick now.

A good many excursionists got off at the first landing-place of Eastville, and I found it easy to keep Miss Elsie in sight, as she was dressed in very light colours.

A knot of men standing on the quay turned to look after the pretty figure as she sped past them.

"Out again with that swell chap, no doubt," muttered one of them; "we of Eastville ain't good enough for Miss Elsie. What ever can Farmer Twemlow be thinking of to let that chit go about like that, and with a chap no one knows?"

"I heerd that Farmer Twemlow had forbidden him the door, and promised to thrash him the first time he spoke to her again."

"Well," answered a third, "I've seen them both come off the steamer together."

"Ay, and he lets her go all that lonely road alone, too. Now Jack Hope wouldn't do that."

I understood now something of the girl and her sweetheart, and hurrying after her, I wondered what I should do.

If I spoke to her, she would surely stick up for her lover, and yet I could not stand by and let her administer a sleeping draught to her father, which, coming from such a source, might be poison.

Still I must speak with the girl and warn her.

But I was too late; just as she reached a stile, a lithe young farmer met her, helped her over, and from her startled cry of "Jack Hope!" I knew that she was all right this time.

How then was I to stop the infamy that Markham had proposed? At every turn my clothes seemed to thrust me back; who would believe an escaped prisoner?

And suddenly the prison gates loomed dark before my mind. What would not I give to live in a quiet place like this and live as other women did. Perhaps the farmer might give me work. But there again the broad arrows—how I hated them—would be so many fingers pointing to my ill-spent life.

The faint tinkle of a piano and the sound of a fresh young voice floated to me as I leant over a low gate, and I spoke out my thoughts.

"Well, it must be done ; as well do it at once."

"What must be done, may I ask?" A stern voice startled me, as the brilliant rays of a lantern were flashed full in my face.

My heart sank, for mercy seemed to have no place in the harsh face that looked at me.

"Are you Farmer Twemlow?" I asked slowly.

"Yes, I am. What do you want with me? I see by your dress that you are a nurse from some hospital, but as I have no kith nor kin except my daughter, I am at a loss to know . . ."

"I must speak to you, farmer, at once ; and your daughter must neither hear nor see me. Nor is this a good place," I said, fearing that Markham might be prowling about.

For a minute or so the old man looked at me with evident suspicion, and then he said gruffly :

"Well, follow me ; you being only a woman and not over-strong looking, I ought not to fear you. But if you deceive me, it will be the worse for you."

He brought me through a garden path to the farmhouse ; but instead of entering the front door, which stood wide open, he turned to the left, and I shuddered as we passed under the spreading branches of a solitary yew-tree. A small latticed window was the only one on this side.

We entered a low door almost in the corner of the building, and it led into a small parlour, which by its rows of books, its iron safe, and its desk, I supposed at once to be the master's own private room.

"Now, we shall not be disturbed here ; say what you have to say. But remember this : Farmer Twemlow is a reputed miser, and never gives charity ; and if begging be not your errand, you'd better speak the truth, for I have no mercy for a liar."

In spite of this discouraging invitation, I did speak the truth. I told the farmer not only of Elsie's folly and danger, and his own, but the whole of my past life.

"I am now at your mercy, farmer," I said at the finish ; "and my giving myself away like this is a proof that I am speaking the

truth. But if you find that I have done you a good turn, let me stay for one night's rest and food, and help me to get work."

"Repeat once more what they agreed upon. Elsie is to mix a powder in my drink, and as soon as I fall asleep she is to place a light in the lattice window by the yew-tree, and that villain will come in. Is that it? Is it all?"

"That is exactly what they agreed to do, sir." I answered, looking with greater fear at his stern set face than I had ever felt at a police-court.

"If I find that what you have told me is untrue, no matter what the time of night, you shall leave my house in care of the constable. I shall soon prove one part of your story."

He left me abruptly, locking the door after him, and as I sat in the dark, I wondered if after all I had made some mistake and had come on a fool's errand. It did not matter so much, thought I; jail was always better than home, and no doubt I was born to be a jail-bird.

All at once I heard the farmer call his daughter and young Hope into a room next to mine.

"Elsie," he said quietly, "turn out your pockets here on to the table."

"What ever for, father?" she answered, and I thought her voice trembled a little. "What a queer notion of yours, dad! And before Jack Hope, too!"

"Do as I tell you," he repeated.

"Well, father, I don't see why I should——"

A cry from her told me that he was using force, but in what way I could not tell.

"There, father, only my handkerchief, thimble, and purse."

She was crying now.

"Shake out that handkerchief."

His voice sounded like thunder.

A minute's pause, and then an exclamation.

"What's in this paper, girl?" the farmer asked in a singularly quiet tone.

"Nothing, father, at least only some powder for pussy; she was sick all last night. I don't know what I've done that you should shout at me like that."

"Silence!" was all the answer he gave her. "Jack, just hand

me that saucer of milk. Pussy might be sick again to-night. We shall give her the medicine at once."

I heard them move ; how I wished I could see them, but though I was separated from them only by a door, I had found from the first that the keyhole was covered from the outside.

A threefold cry startled me: From the men it almost sounded like the words, "Dead, by Jove!" from the girl it was a piercing shriek.

"She's fainting," cried Jack Hope.

"And well she may," answered her father. "Stay here, Hope. I have work for you, my lad. When I have carried this daughter of mine to her room and locked her in, I will tell you all it means."

His voice was trembling now, and I felt sorry for him, it sounded so sad. Yet I seemed to know that for this one night at least I was safe, and I heaved a sigh of relief.

A knock came to my door, and then the key was turned in the lock. The farmer's face was dreadfully pale, but not so stern as at first.

"I want you to pass the night with my daughter, but first of all you must eat and change your dress. In that wardrobe there are plenty of my dead wife's gowns, so make your choice and hide the clothes you came in."

It was spoken curtly enough, but I could have knelt at his feet to thank him ; surely he would never give me up after this.

After my supper I was led up to Elsie's room, and passing through the kitchen, I shuddered to see the stiffened body of the dead cat. "But for me," I thought, "Farmer Twemlow would be stretched out like that by now."

I found the young girl lying in a dead heap on her bed. But I soon had her comfortably between the sheets, and, utterly tired out, I lay down beside her.

What happened during the night I never learnt till long after : the farmer sent Jack for a couple of policemen, then placed the light in the window near the yew-tree, and waited. Markham fell into the trap easily, and as he had come armed with several suspicious-looking tools, he was conveyed to the lock-up and charged with attempted burglary. Everything was done to keep the girl's name out of the business, and no one seemed to wonder much who I was.

And for a very good reason, too. On the following morning when I went down to breakfast, Farmer Twemlow asked me in a very different voice :

"All you told me about yourself is true, I suppose, but is it the whole truth? You are not married?"

"No, sir," I answered, feeling ashamed of my past life now for the first time. "No good man would dream of having such as me, and I would have none of the others."

He paused one moment, then looked at me keenly.

"You've saved my life and my girl's too, no doubt; you may choose between two offers I make you. The one is money sufficient to emigrate and settle in any part of the world you like to name; and the other is to remain here as my wife. We can be married to-morrow by licence."

I looked at him straight to see if he were not joking; but no, he was perfectly serious. Both projects were equally tempting. What one lacked in safety, it made up for in greater comfort. Still I hesitated.

"Which would you prefer, farmer?" I asked after a bit. "You see, both ways are equally pleasant to me, so long as it is liberty. But I am a rare bad lot, the constable always said, and——"

"Yet you risked your liberty to do us a good turn. Now, my girl, I would sooner you stayed; Hawthorn Farm wants a mistress sadly, and its master is willing to trust you."

"Then, sir, I'll stay."

We drove to the neighbouring town the next day and got married quietly in the little parish church.

Ten long, happy years followed that eventful day, and when my husband lay on his death-bed, his last words were :

"Martha, my love, you've been a true and faithful wife. God bless you."

But his confidence had taken a more practical form, for he had left me sole mistress of all he possessed.

Jack Hope had married Elsie soon after our marriage, and had sailed with her to the West Indies. His ranche is one of the most prosperous, and his last letter appeals to me, whom he fondly calls mother, to go out to them and end my days in the tropics.

It is strange that now again two paths lie before me: Jack's home, where I am to be the loved grandma, or the squire's

stately mansion, of which that noble-hearted man begs me to be the mistress.

I love Squire Tempest as I have never loved before, and I cannot bear to think that his deep grey eyes might look with scorn into mine if I could bring myself to unveil the past as I did to Farmer Twemlow.

I could not marry him under false colours, and I cannot risk losing that one love that is so precious to me. I refused him this afternoon ; he looked grieved : still I let him go.

If he should read these lines, I hope his heart will not harden towards me. From the day that I crossed the threshold of Hawthorn Farm, I can say truthfully that I have done my duty towards all, but still I love him too well to let him link his noble life to that of an escaped prisoner.

The Librarian of Castle Douglas.

By RUSSELL SIDNEY.

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UP, up, up, so slowly, so laboriously! Would the long hill-climb never come to an end, or was I for the rest of my mortal life to remain penned up in this lumbering old fly, with this equally ancient and decrepit charioteer and the stumbling, broken-down horse?

It seemed like it. For three long hours had I been immured in this jolting country vehicle, jogging leisurely along any level portions of road, which were few and far between, but more often toiling up interminable hills, each appearing longer and steeper than the last; and as the day became darker and colder, the scenery assumed to my eyes, in the grey autumnal light, ever a more forbidding aspect.

I certainly felt no enthusiasm on my first acquaintance with the land of the brawny Scot. The vast stretches of moor looked so bleak and desolate; the cold, stony hills, towering above and around, sometimes appearing to barricade all further advance along the barren, rock-strewn valley through which our road lay, had nothing on that late autumn afternoon of the soft, smiling beauty of Wales, where my own home was situated. In fact, I felt too tired, cross, and hungry to admire a paradise if it had been suddenly revealed to my eyes, for I had not enjoyed a single half-hour's rest or a satisfactory repast since I had started by the night-mail for my present destination.

I was cross with the perverseness of human nature, because this long, wearisome drive was all of my own seeking. By a little forethought and an ounce of common sense I might have been then sitting behind a pair of blood horses, going ten miles an hour, with the additional pleasure of congenial companionship and the certainty of arriving at my journey's end before night overtook me, a consummation devoutly to be wished, but appear-

ing exceedingly problematical at my present slow rate of advancement. But wilful woman will have her way, and pay for it afterwards with inconsequent vain regret.

My old and dearest schoolfellow, Mary Douglas, having completed her two years at a finishing academy at Brussels, had written asking me to fulfil a promise long made to visit her in her Scotch home, to which she had just returned. The house, she wrote, was full of guests—a bright, cheerful party of young people. Would I join them as soon as I could, at least in time to take part in some theatricals that were to come off next week? If I sent a letter by return saying I would start the next day, I should be met at the station, twelve miles from Castle Douglas, by Mary herself, and driven to her home in her own mail-phaeton behind “such a pair of chestnuts—real beauties!” Mary was always devoted to riding and driving, and was, moreover, a famous whip. But the best-laid plans of mice and men are prone to fail. When Mary’s letter arrived I was from home for a day or two. On my return I found it would be too late to write my acceptance of her invitation. A telegram, to my economical mind and for the slender resources of my scantily furnished purse, was out of the question (a shilling per mile from the station in those days); I therefore determined to answer my friend’s letter in *propria persona*, feeling assured that I should not be an unwelcome guest, and that no time was to be lost in learning my part in the proposed theatricals if I was to acquit myself creditably.

I must confess that my dear mother, who detested surprises herself or any breach of the conventional, was both shocked at and antagonistic to my erratic line of conduct; but for many years I had always settled matters for myself, and did not, I fear, pay such attention to her remonstrances as the occasion warranted.

And this was the result. It was only with the greatest difficulty I had been able to procure this primitive conveyance in the little village near the railway station, the inhabitants even looking askance at a visitor for Castle Douglas who was not met by any of the family, nor the dog-cart sent for her baggage.

I put my head out of the window for the twentieth time during that long, dreary drive.

"When shall we get to the Castle? Is it near now?" I queried in accents of despair.

"It is so," replied my ancient Jehu, in slow, measured tones. "Atop o' the hill we com' on the lodge gates, and abou' ha' a mile ye'll be by the Castle"

Cheered by the near prospect of friends, tea, and fire, I bestowed more lively interest on my surroundings; and as we breasted the hill could not refrain from an exclamation of delight, so much fairer was the view than any that had before met my eyes.

The road took a sharp turn down a steep declivity into a verdant, sheltered vale, in the midst of which stood out in all its turreted picturesqueness a fine old mediæval building. Beautiful pine and birch woods clothed the hillsides, but immediately environing the Castle was a well-timbered park, with lovely grassy glades and sylvan vistas. The last gleams of an autumn sun hitherto obscured by clouds glinted the whole with a mellow golden light.

The old horse, on the strength of going downhill, and perhaps inspired with the knowledge that rest and oats awaited him, pricked up his ears and went at a good steady pace along the carriage drive, soon coming to a standstill in front of the ivy-covered entrance. A prolonged ring brought a footman to the door.

I asked for Miss Douglas. Mrs. Douglas had been dead some years, and the young and only daughter was now reigning supreme.

"Miss Douglas was out," replied the man.

Here was a poser!

I had only met Colonel Douglas once or twice in my school-days, when he had paid rare visits to his daughter, and I hardly liked meeting him without Mary's intervening presence. However, I asked for the colonel.

"None of the house-party are in 'at present. They are up the glen shooting, and are not expected back for another hour," answered James obsequiously, but with what I imagined a supercilious and malicious delight at my visible discomfiture.

"I am come to stay—at least, Miss Douglas does not expect me to-day," I began helplessly, becoming more confused and incoherent under the man's blank, unblinking stare. "I

had better come in and wait for Miss Douglas," I stammered forth.

The cab-door was opened, and alighting, I paid my old charioteer, asked for my boxes to be taken somewhere, *where* I did not care. I felt too mortified and worried to know what to do under the circumstances, and if the butler, an old, experienced retainer of the family, had not just then appeared, I believe James, suspicious of my manner and undignified arrival, would have offered me a seat in the hall as a crowning insult.

The butler, however, took matters in at a glance, ushered me through the fine old hall into a large but warm and cosy library, where a tea-table was laid out before a brisk log fire.

"Miss Douglas will be home shortly," the man remarked as he apologized for not showing me into the drawing-room, as the house-party always met before dinner in the library for afternoon tea. I should, however, have some refreshment brought to me at once, as I must be fatigued with the long drive.

Though I expostulated against any innovation of existing rules being made on my behalf, in a few minutes, while I had been warming my feet before the fire, he returned with a well-filled tray and left me to discuss a delicious cup of tea and some of the hot cakes for which the Scotch are so justly celebrated.

Having thoroughly enjoyed my meal, I looked round the room. It was wainscoted in dark oak. The ceiling was richly panelled, and had a finely carved cornice. Between the latter and the wainscot, the walls were lined with books, interspersed here and there by old family portraits on panel. Though not much of a bibliophile, I gathered at a glance that the collection was a choice and valuable one; but it was not the room so much as the view from it that mostly attracted my attention. Facing me as I sat was a deep bay-window, the upper portions filled in with priceless antique stained glass of exquisitely subdued colouring and the rest in mullioned squares. In the deep embrasures of the window were crimson-covered seats, while heavy curtains of the same hue hung soft and warm on each side of the bay. The window looked out upon the long avenue of beeches leading up to the Castle; beyond towered a purple heather-covered mountain, just catching the last rays of the sun, while the valley was fast being enwrapped in hazy shadows. It was this lovely combination of form and colouring that

attracted my eye, and rising from my seat, I walked straight up to the middle portion of the window, placed my knee on the cushioned seat, and looked out on the beautiful scene. There was not a sign of the expected party, but I was well content to remain alone, and in contemplation of what gave me such delight. I watched the afterglow fade from the mountain-top, the purple shadows deepen, and the blue-grey mist arise where I felt certain nearer inspection would reveal the neighbourhood of a stream or lake.

As I was laying plans as to which point of interest I would devote myself to in my first tour of investigation on the morrow, I was suddenly startled by hearing a gentle but most audible deep-drawn sigh just behind me.

I turned hastily round, and what was my astonishment to perceive, hidden away in the corner of the window nearest one of the heavy crimson curtains, with his back resting against the wall, his legs crossed, and on his knee a large and ancient-looking tome, a very diminutive and mild old gentleman, dressed in black velvet and characterized by a queer, old-fashioned cut about his garments that at once struck the eye!

He was looking down on his volume, and did not raise his head when I gave a very perceptible start and uttered a smothered "Oh!" of astonishment.

Evidently the old man had been in the room since my entrance. Concealed by the curtain, no one could have perceived his presence from the interior of the library; and when I had crossed rapidly over to the window I had glanced neither to right nor left, so riveted had been my gaze upon the outside scene.

Still it was not a pleasant thought to find that, himself unseen, this strange, unsociable old gentleman had been perchance silently criticising my every movement. I felt aggrieved at his taciturnity, and it was with some acrimony in my voice I gave vent to the feeling uppermost in my mind.

"I beg your pardon. I did not know *you* were here, or I would have spoken before."

The small silver-grey head rose slowly, and a pair of kind but age-dimmed eyes gazed mildly at me. The old man did not speak.

"I suppose he's deaf," I thought, and raising my voice slightly, I continued:

"Do you think the party will be long now? The evening closes in so quickly, they ought soon to be here."

No answer, and after that one placid look the quiet eyes returned to the study of the crabbed and ancient page.

"He's very rude or deaf, or perhaps not quite right in his head," I inwardly surmised after this second rebuff to my friendly conversational intentions; and seeing my mysterious companion did not evidently consider me worthy of a remark, I turned my back upon him with some hauteur and chagrin, to watch in the gathering gloom for the first glimpse of the returning sportsmen.

In a few minutes—I cannot tell how many—the short autumn day had closed, and the room was suddenly wrapped in darkness, except for the glimmering firelight. I was roused from my meditations by the entrance of the butler with a footman carrying lighted candles, and glancing hastily round on the embrasured corner, I was not a little surprised to find that my silent student had disappeared!

Before I could determine in my mind how he could have slipped away unperceived, voices were heard in the hall, and the next moment Mary Douglas's soft girlish arms were round me, and her hearty kisses pressing on my cheeks as she gave me a warm and appreciative welcome. She and her friends had come in through a side entrance, which accounted for my not seeing them.

She both praised and scolded me in the same breath for my unexpected appearance: the first, because I relieved her mind of great anxiety anent the theatricals; and the second, because I had not been met by the carriage and had had such an inhospitable reception on my first arrival.

"However," she cried, with her bright young voice, "here's papa and my brother Jack, my youngest brother, you know. Fred, the eldest, does not arrive till next week. He's coming home from India on leave."

Colonel Douglas spoke and looked a hearty welcome. I was introduced to the many visitors at the Castle, and we were soon a happy and merry party. By-and-by Mary took me up to my room, and what with chatting over past days, present plans, and future gaieties, I had no opportunity of making any inquiry regarding the old man in the library.

At the bright and beautifully appointed dinner-table I, however, glanced round at the assembled guests to see if he were among them ; but there was no one in the least corresponding to his appearance. In fact, it was a party composed chiefly of two or three young married couples, several youths and just newly emancipated schoolgirls.

"They were all her friends and Jack's," Mary informed me. "Papa and Fred would have all their staid old fogies later on."

After dinner we had music, singing, and an impromptu dance in the old oak-panelled hall, the most delightful pleasure of all to young blood and agile feet. It was late before, with candlestick in hand, I went along the corridor to my room, followed by Mary, who, with the excuse of seeing all was comfortable for the night, entered with me to enjoy a confidential chat, such as girls delight in, however late may be the hour and however detrimental to the duration of their beauty-sleep. Just as she was finally departing, after the third or fourth "Good-night," I suddenly remembered my silent companion in the library.

"By the bye, Mary," I asked, retarding her progress to the door, "who was that funny old gentleman I saw in the library before you came in ? I looked for him at dinner, but there was no one in the least like him at the table."

Mary turned round sharply. Her bright colour had faded suddenly as she answered quickly :

"Old gentleman ? What do you mean, Flora ? There's no one old staying in the house, no one older than papa, and you don't call him old, I hope."

"No, of course not !" I replied. "But this was a queer, old-fashioned man sitting in the big bay-window reading. Surely you know. He was dressed——"

Mary had come close up to me. Her eyes distended, her whole face expressing a fearful anxiety. She finished the sentence for me, clutching me round the wrist with a nervous, hysterical grasp.

"In black velvet ! A very little old man dressed in black velvet, reading out of a big book ? Oh, Flora, don't say you saw *him* ! Don't say it ! Don't say it !"

And she burst into a fit of violent weeping. Surprised and shocked, I soothed her as best I could ; but it was impossible to deny the evidence of my own eyes. I was obliged, moreover, to

acknowledge to the accuracy of the descriptive questions with which she hurriedly plied me.

"But who is he, dear? Why are you so distressed at my seeing him?" I asked in bewilderment, no suspicion of the truth as yet dawning on my mind.

Mary raised herself with an effort, and, checking her sobs, said slowly:

"Flora, you don't understand. Don't be frightened, dear; *he* can do *you* no harm. It's only the sign of evil to *us*, only trouble—death to one of our family! Didn't you see, dear, didn't you feel, that it was no living man you saw? It was the ghost of Castle Douglas!"

I must confess to a momentary weakness. I shivered, but recovered my composure the next second.

"Nonsense, Mary!" I replied with decision. "This old man was alive. I heard him sigh quite plainly, and he looked up at me. Surely he's your father's librarian?"

"Two hundred years ago he was the librarian here, and was devoted to the clan, saving the life of one of the Douglasses in one of the rebellions; and ever since, before any death in the family, he appears not to us, but to the greatest stranger in the house."

"Then I only wish he didn't!" I exclaimed with reprehensible levity.

Mary shook her head with sorrowful insistence.

"He came when my great-grandfather died; when his brother John was killed at Waterloo; when Uncle James was lost in the Khyber Pass; when grandpapa fell from his horse and was carried home dead. Oh, Flora, it's always true! and now who is the warning for? Not papa! oh, not papa!" she whispered shudderingly in an agonized tone. "And then there's Jack and dear old Fred. No, no, it can't be Fred! it would be too cruel, too hard, just coming home from India. Flora, Flora, say it's not Fred or papa!"

She was sobbing again hysterically. I was not superstitious, and had always treated ghost stories with the supercilious and amused contempt I deemed in my wisdom they deserved. I was still but half convinced in my mind that the figure I had seen had anything of the supernatural about it. I tried, therefore, every argument to prove the reality of the little old man in the library, and how substantially human he appeared to be.

It was all in vain ; and, comfortless and depressed, with her pretty brown eyes red with weeping, Mary at last departed to her room, having made me promise I would not mention what I had seen to a single soul.

In a puzzled and distressed state of mind, I also went to rest. I wished sincerely I had never set foot in Castle Douglas if my advent was the harbinger of evil tidings. A bright, sunny morning rather dispelled my gloomy thoughts ; and when I met Mary at the breakfast-table I was in hopes, on scanning her sweet, serene face, that she too had got the better of her superstitious fears ; but a second glance revealed to me that she was putting restraint on herself and striving by a forced gaiety to conceal a depressing anxiety. She afterwards, in a few moments of undisturbed conversation, confided to me that she could not throw off a foreboding of evil ; and, with tears welling in her eyes, she said her fears were for Fred, the dearly loved, idolized soldier-brother on his way home after a four years' absence in the East.

At luncheon that day Colonel Douglas mentioned his eldest son's expected return with much pride and pleasure.

"We Douglasses have always had a soldier in the Black Watch, Miss Morley," he remarked, addressing me ; "and though I didn't care much for my eldest boy to serve in India, he must take his turn with the rest. Our family have done great service to the Crown in our day, I can tell you, and Fred is not one to play at soldiering. He has got a medal and a clasp already for that frontier skirmish two years ago. But now it will be all play and no work. Next week there'll be grand doings to welcome him, and I'm glad you'll be here to witness a Highland fête. Let me see, Mary, next Thursday, isn't it, his ship arrives at Southampton ? It was signalled off Gibraltar three days ago ; but those old troopers are always slow and sure. However, he's coming home in command of his company, so I must not complain. I only trust he's got over that attack of fever he wrote about. Young men will be young men, Miss Morley ; and Fred will not take proper precautions when he goes pig-sticking. Always despises the sun till it bowls him over ; but he said he was nearly all right in his last letter to you, Mary, from Bombay ?"

His daughter gave a hurried assent. I pitied Mary's sorrowful, abstracted air ; but what could I say to comfort her ? It was the

first time I had encountered so deep-rooted a superstition, or had to counteract by logical common sense so morbid a presentiment.

Two days sped on, not joyously and lightly, as I had expected on my first arrival, but with a fateful oppression about them that I, for one, could not uplift. Mary tried her best to appear cheerful and unconcerned before her numerous guests. I could, however, see how great the strain was. She seemed to be always expecting some calamity, and at last she communicated a portion of her nervous excitement to me, till I found myself instinctively watching the opening of every letter and the arrival of any new-comer, besides feeling unconsciously relieved when either Colonel Douglas or Jack returned safe and sound after a short absence from the house.

"To-morrow," remarked the colonel on the evening of the fourth day of my visit, "we shall have Fred's telegram. He will send it off as soon as he arrives at Southampton, and we shall have him here, God willing, two or three days after."

I must confess to feeling horribly nervous and anxious for the appearance of that portentous yellow envelope. I furtively watched the carriage drive, and made many excuses for not leaving the house on the following day.

I saw Mary felt equally anxious and on the alert. Her white face was laughingly remarked on by her father, who begged her to welcome her brother with roses rather than lilies, as the former were certainly the most becoming.

We were all at dinner. Two or three of the party, seeing their young hostess silent and *distracted* and their host striving to keep up an appearance of interest in the general conversation, though his ears were evidently strained to catch the slightest sound, were doing their little best to keep up a desultory chatter, when a loud ring was heard at the hall-door.

"The telegram!" exclaimed both Mary and her father simultaneously.

Repressing their mutual anxiety with a praiseworthy effort for social *convenance*, they patiently awaited the arrival of the servant. Mary was trembling visibly, her face blanched and her fingers nervously interlaced. The colonel looked flushed and excited.

"Now we shall know when to expect him," he said with a proud gleam of light in his kind eyes, and just a little suspicious trembling of the lip under his long, tawny moustache.

After all, emotion was permissible. Fred was his first-born, his heir ; and he was returning to the home of his fathers.

The fatal yellow envelope was brought in on a salver and presented to his master by the grey-headed old butler with undisguised interest pervading his otherwise undemonstrative face.

Colonel Douglas tore open the paper. His eyes glanced rapidly down the sheet ; as they did so an awful change came over his countenance. His features quivered with intense excitement, and then grew dull, fixed, and ghastly.

The nearest guest sprang forward just in time to take the telegram from the nerveless hand as the colonel fell back in his chair in a deadly faint. Mary rushed wildly from the top of the table to her father's side.

"He's dead ! Fred's dead ! I know it !" she shrieked ; "I know it !" and she snatched the closely written sheet from her friend.

It was too true. I, looking over her shoulder, read the fatal words :

"Captain Douglas came on board ill with fever ; bad symptoms at Suez ; rapidly worse ; died at sea two days after leaving Gibraltar. Body at Southampton. We await orders from family."

* * * * *

At the very hour of the day he died, the old librarian of Castle Douglas had appeared to me in the bay-window of the library !

* * * * *

Since then I have never laughed at ghosts. Nor have I again trespassed on my friends' hospitality unexpectedly.

Crossed at Right Angles.

A STORY.

By S. J. DOUGLAS.

CHAPTER VII.

WHILE the skaters were enjoying themselves on the ice, Agnes was sitting in the drawing-room, listening with weary politeness to Miss Lacy's indefatigable stream of small talk.

The two ladies had come in early, for though Miss Lacy was more at home on her skates than poor Agnes, she had reached the age when skating was no longer an unmixed pleasure.

"Enough is as good as a feast," she said.

She made herself comfortable in an armchair which was not so low that it obliged her to bend her stiff figure too much, and, placed at a distance from the fire, which warmed her without roasting her, took her knitting, and began to talk. How she talked! Agnes was amused at first, but when tea had come and gone, and there were still no signs of returning skaters, she grew restless, and began to think that it was dull, alone in the house with old Bertha Lacy, while the others were enjoying themselves out of doors.

Even Basil Traill was still on the ice, for he had learnt the new accomplishment of skating with such marvellous rapidity that he was willing to go on for ever. Agnes had made sure that the party would come in for tea, but as the clock struck five and then six, and ticked steadily on towards seven, and still there were no signs of returning skaters, she wished that she had not taken off her boots, for then she might have gone back to the lake to see what was going on. Even the children were there, and, with a feeling of injury, she reflected that if every one was going to stay out all night, she might as well join the party, little as she enjoyed skating.

When Miss Lacy went upstairs to fetch a new ball of wool, she went to the window, and tried to look out. Nothing but the drawing-room was reflected on the black panes, so she pulled up the lower part of the heavy sash and looked out.

Voices and laughter reached her ears distinctly. She could distinguish the different voices and almost hear the words. Now and then Fanny's laugh rang out above the others. The ruddy glow of the bonfires lit up patches of the lake and the surrounding trees, and she could see dark figures flitting to and fro in and out of the shadow. As her eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, the terraces and garden walks took form; it was not so very dark. Soon the whole scene was quite clear to her.

She was seated, wrapped in the window-curtain and enjoying the cool, frosty air on her hot cheeks, when Miss Lacy returned.

"Good gracious, child!" she screamed. "Do you want to catch your death of cold? What are you thinking of?"

She came behind and peered out, nevertheless, for her curiosity was too much for her prudence.

"Mad things," she ejaculated, "skipping about at this time of night! Upon my word, they look for all the world like a lot of little black imps in hell."

Agnes was too much shocked to reply.

"There is Fanny, now," said Miss Lacy, peering out through her glasses. "She ought to be ashamed of herself. Mother of two children, prancing about in the middle of the night with that Taylor man! I wonder Miles allows it. Ah, there is that lanky young Stokes," she went on. "I'd recognize his figure anywhere. It's like one of those jumping-jacks, that flop their arms and legs when you pull a string. Who is sitting by the bonfire? Oh, Miss Aylmer, of course, and Mr. Gervase. I dislike that girl. She is bad form."

Agnes rose and closed the window, and went slowly back to the fireside.

"Yes, I took that girl's measure the very first evening. For all she's so quiet and prim, I saw through her," said Miss Lacy as she re-established herself comfortably in her chair. "If you have nothing else to do, perhaps you will hold this skein while I wind it."

Agnes had no choice but to obey. She stretched out her hands submissively for the skein, and resigned herself to listen.

The skein was tangled, and as she unravelled it, Miss Lacy discoursed unceasingly. Agnes sighed at intervals, but there was no escape. Her hands were fettered ; she was chained by a rope of wool.

"I can see through most people, I flatter myself," old Bertha began. "There's very little escapes *me*. I know when to keep a quiet tongue in my head, but I have eyes all the same. That girl can't deceive me. She's a flirt, a common or garden flirt, and in *our* class of life that sort of thing only goes on in the servants' hall."

"Oh, surely not," said Agnes.

"Certainly," said Miss Lacy firmly, "that *sort* of flirting. There is flirting *and* flirting. I don't object to the kind that is all talk and chaff and carried on above-board for every one to see. If a woman likes to have some silly fellow dangling after her and making a fool of her, well, let her ! I shouldn't care about it myself. But the sort of flirting that should be put down with an iron hand is the quiet kind that goes on in corners behind people's backs. If you see two people looking as if butter would not melt in their mouths and always sitting in each other's pockets when they think nobody is looking, you may be sure no good will come of it. It all ends in hysterics and gossip and general ructions—mark my words."

Miss Lacy pushed up her under-lip and sniffed.

Agnes knew that her mother disapproved strongly of flirting as an amusement flavouring too strongly of the servants' hall or the society of the barracks ; and she was very much annoyed with Gertrude, though she would not have owned it for worlds.

"However, Mr. Gervase is very well able to take care of himself," continued Miss Lacy, coming out victorious after a prolonged struggle with a tangle. "Bless you, he sees through that designing minx ! The marvel is to me, he should take the trouble to amuse himself with a girl of that sort."

"She is very good-looking," said Agnes. She longed to contradict Miss Lacy at every point, merely because she was keenly convinced of the truth of her unpalatable remarks.

"H'm !" said Miss Lacy. "If you admire that untidy, floppy style I suppose she is. For my part, I like a girl to be upright and neat and sensible. I've no patience with airs and graces, and

lounging and sprawling. It may be *graceful*, but I suppose I am behind the times. I can't appreciate it."

"What you say would apply to many girls of one's acquaintance besides Gertrude," said Agnes; "to Fanny for instance."

"My dear girl, you don't understand me. There are two ways of doing everything. A woman like Fanny could stand on her head in the drawing-room if she liked, and she would still be a lady; she couldn't help it. It's born and bred in her, and everything she does or says—not that I approve of all her goings on, bless you, no!—is stamped with it. But it's a very different pair of shoes when say Miss Aylmer, for instance—not that I am bringing any accusation against her; for all I know, she is a good, well-brought-up young person: but say she tries to stand on her head. Well, she can't do it. It becomes vulgar at once."

"How could it be anything else?" said Agnes. "I should consider such an act vulgar if the Queen herself did it."

"Oh, well, of course, that's only a *façon de parler*," said Miss Lacy, "though I did once see Millie Dorsetshire turn head over heels, and very neatly she did it, too."

"Of course she is privileged," said Agnes drily. "*She* may do what she likes."

"To a certain extent," said Miss Lacy, "but, mind you, I think that was going rather too far. The aristocracy have a certain amount of dignity to keep up. Of course there was nobody there but ladies and her husband and brother, but her maid would go and tell the story downstairs, of course, and it would be repeated in all the housekeepers' rooms in England, and the maids would tell their mistresses, and it would be a fine scandal at the end. You know that shocking story about Lucy Towers and young Silsby? Well, how do you think that began? With a pill! It was perfectly simple, but the affair nearly landed the whole family in the divorce court, only old Aunt Grantham came to the rescue and told the truth in plain words. She was never afraid to call a spade a spade."

"I think it's a mercy every one doesn't consider plain-speaking a virtue," said Agnes.

"You needn't hit at me, my dear," said Miss Lacy placidly.

"I love naughty stories, and the more improper they are the better I like them. Have you heard the one about——"

"Thank you, I don't want to hear it," said Agnes with dignity. "I suppose I am old-fashioned too, but mother never lets me read any of the modern novels, because, she says, they are not fit for a young girl ; so I am sure she would not like me to listen to an improper story."

"Bless you, child !" said Miss Lacy. "Your mother lives in a glass house, and shouldn't throw stones. I saw her myself once—at a ball—being kissed by Bob Dewsburgh under the staircase. He wasn't a general then."

"He is her first cousin," said Agnes stiffly. "They would kiss each other now, I daresay, if they met."

"I told you so," said Miss Lacy teasingly, with shrieks of laughter ; "of course they would. Where would they do it, do you think, under the staircase or——"

"Really, Miss Lacy," said Agnes, on the verge of tears, "I cannot allow you to speak of my mother in such a way. You know quite well she would never do anything low or vulgar."

"There, there, you silly child, I was only chaffing. It was all my nonsense. You go back to your mother and ask her, with my love, how many years ago it is since Bob Dewsburgh kissed her under the staircase at Lady Sophia Digby's ball. She will tell you all about it. Why, she and I used to be two of the biggest romps, the wildest madcaps, of our time. She was older than I, of course, and I used to look up to her and envy her her witty way of talking. Why, she had the best memory for a *risqué* story of any one I ever knew. You ask her."

"Mother was considered very amusing, I know," said Agnes rather doubtfully. She could not be so disrespectful as to imagine her clever, stately mother, with her large, commanding features and stern eyes, as *fast* or bold, or indulging in impropriety of any kind.

"I saw your mother last at a Primrose League tea-fight in London," said Miss Lacy. "She was doing the gracious, you know—'our noble chairwoman,' and that sort of thing—but we had time for a chat behind two fat old parsons, so intent on lapping up tea that they didn't hear us."

"Dear mother !" said Agnes affectionately. "She is so good.

She never refuses to go to any of these meetings. People are always asking her to take chairs, and open bazaars, and give away prizes, and those sort of tiresome things. But mother says every one ought to do their duty, however disagreeable it may be, and she always goes."

"You bet she does," said Miss Lacy. "Your mother always liked patronizing people. Aunt Grantham used to call her 'our gracious patroness.'"

Agnes did not know whether to laugh or to be angry.

"How does she like having a daughter to trot round?" went on Miss Lacy, sublimely unconscious of Agnes's embarrassment. "She won't be happy till she's married you to just the very right person, and seen you settled as the daughter of your father and mother should be settled."

She watched Agnes's face sharply. She knew that a marriage between her and Gervase was considered highly desirable. "He may be poor, but at least one knows who he is and where he comes from," Agnes's mother was wont to say. "And in these days of Americans and soap-boilers and upstarts that is a great thing. Agnes will have enough for both; and I would rather see my daughter married into a respectable family, to a man who can be depended on to behave like a gentleman, than to a millionaire rolling in money whose mother was a laundress, and his grandfather—if he had one—an office-boy in a brewery."

"Mother is not at all one of those designing, horrible mothers who must marry off their daughters, whatever they do," said Agnes innocently. "She says she would rather I never married at all than that I married a man I did not love and respect."

"She doesn't mean you to be an old maid, all the same," said Miss Lacy. "I knew your mother before you were born; and, mark my words, you will be married to the right man—and, of course, you will both love and respect him—before you are many years older."

Agnes blushed, and was silent. She thought it was very indelicate to speak of such matters at all. Deep in the innermost depths of her heart she knew quite well that Gervase was her parents' choice; and she knew, too, that if she did not marry him she would never marry at all, for she could never love any one

else. Childlike as she was, she had a fund of quiet strength, which knew its own will, and could stick to its own way if need be. With time and experience it would mould her into a calm and useful type of womanhood—a pattern wife and mother. She was even now tasting for the first time of the cup of life, and the first taste was unexpectedly bitter. The first fruit of it was growing and taking shape in a quiet but relentless animosity for the girl who had been her friend, and who, she felt in some vague way, was ill repaying her friendship by appropriating the man she had hitherto unconsciously looked upon as her own property.

“If Fanny wasn’t a regular noodle—and she always was one, so I suppose one can’t expect her to be anything else,” Miss Lacy said, joining the new ball of worsted skilfully into the elaborate shooting stocking she was knitting—“she would put a stop to that girl’s little game. It’s as plain as my face—and every one knows I am as ugly as sin ; my own mother said so when she first saw me—that she’s straining every nerve to catch your cousin. Such a fish as he is doesn’t stroll into her waters every day. Poor girl, I expect she has never spoken to a man much above a grocer.”

“I don’t know why you have taken it into your head,” said Agnes with some asperity, “that Gertrude is not a lady ; she is quite as well born as I am myself, or any one else here.”

“My dear, her mother was a governess,” said Miss Lacy. “Of course, every one knows her father, Alfred Aylmer—the most foolish man that lives. Money turns to water in his hands. He is all right ; but, poor idiot, like everything else he did, he made a mess of his marriage.”

“His second marriage,” said Agnes, delighted to prove Miss Lacy wrong. “His first wife was a Moray of Bardon, and she was Gertrude’s mother.”

“Kate Moray married Gilbert, Alfred’s brother,” said Miss Lacy, with the calmness of one who, if she knew nothing else, at least knew her Burke and Debrett by heart.

“All I know is,” said Agnes, “that Gertrude’s mother was Miss Kate Moray of Bardon.”

Miss Lacy refused to own that she was wrong.

Even when Agnes produced the Peerage and showed her the proof in black and white, she firmly asserted that there must have

been two Miss Kate Morays of Bardon ; for a Kate Moray married Gilbert Aylmer—of that she was positive as she was of her own name—though no Gilbert Aylmer was mentioned in the Peerage at all. “He died young,” she said when Agnes pointed this out.

“Then how did he marry?” said Agnes.

“He married at twenty-one, and died in six months, and his wife died three months afterwards of a broken heart,” said Miss Lacy, disposing of the whole affair with one clean sweep.

Agnes was unconvinced, but said no more.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE theatricals were over. Agnes woke up the morning afterwards with a feeling of thankfulness, as if some much-dreaded ordeal were safely past. She was not only relieved that her own part was played, but she was glad that the party was to break up next day, and each member go his separate way. She did not conceal from herself that she was glad that Gervase and Gertrude would be so soon parted. Their behaviour had caused her an amount of annoyance that she was ashamed to own. She was too proud to confess that she was jealous ; but as she sat behind the scenes and watched them acting, or if they were not on the stage, at the wings together, there was an irritability in her bearing which bore a remarkable resemblance to the green-eyed monster. She had gone to bed tired and cross, and had even shed a few tears in the depths of her pillow, but she woke in the morning with her usual serenity quite restored to her. She had a very clear-sighted mind, and it was seldom that her calm, correct judgment was betrayed into exaggeration. As she read in the little book of devotions which always accompanied the operation of hair brushing, she decided that the jealous mood of last night had been unjustifiable, that she had exaggerated the importance of the situation.

She went down to breakfast cool, neat, collected, every hair in its place. As usual, she was one of the first to appear, and the array of letters on the sideboard was almost untouched when she went to look for her own. An orange telegraph envelope bore her name.

"A telegram for you, Agnes," said Lady Fanny, who was ladling spoonfuls of tea with lavish carelessness into the tea-pot. "Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"It's from father," said Agnes dolefully when she had read the missive. "'Start by ten train Friday morning without fail. Will meet you at G ———. Nothing wrong.'"

"Must you go?" said Lady Fanny.

"What can it be?" said some one.

"Can't you wire back, asking for reasons?" suggested another.

"I suppose papa doesn't wish me to travel on Saturday, as it is market-day," said Agnes submissively. "He says there are always so many people travelling on this line on that day."

"Do they know that we are going to dance to-night? Wouldn't they let you stop on one night longer?"

"I'm afraid not," said Agnes. "I must go."

"Poor girl! What a shame!" said Lady Fanny.

"Perhaps it's an appointment with the dentist."

"Well, if you must go at ten," said Mr. Adare, "you have only just time. Must you really go? Shall I order the carriage?"

"I am afraid I must go," said Agnes.

She had been trained to obey without asking why, but she seldom felt so rebellious as on this occasion.

The whole party came to the door to see her off, and the men raised a cheer as the carriage bore her away, almost in tears. The last people she saw on the doorsteps, before a bend in the avenue hid the house, were Gervase and Gertrude.

"I think you ought to go for a walk this morning, Miss Aylmer; you are looking rather pale after last night. It is a beautiful day, just the weather for a climb up to the monument. Will you come?"

"Yes," said Gertrude, rather doubtfully, "if any of the others are going."

"Nonsense!" he said in a lower voice. "You know we don't want the others."

"Well, as it is the last opportunity we shall have," said Gertrude with a suspicion of a sigh, "I suppose we may."

"Last opportunity? You're not going yet, are you?"

"To-morrow."

"By Jove, you're not! I am not going till next week. Could you stay on if Fan asked you?"

"No, oh no, I don't think so," said Gertrude hurriedly.

"When are we to meet again, then?" he said.

They were still standing at the front door in the sunshine. There had been a thaw, and the air was as mild as spring; the snow had all gone, leaving only white wreaths under banks and hedges. A sound of dripping and running water was heard everywhere.

"When are we to meet again?" he repeated.

"When, indeed?" she replied, plucking ivy-leaves from the balustrade and stripping the green from their stalks. He leant on the stonework with a cigarette.

"I hope it will be very soon," he said, watching and admiring her lithe figure as she leant backwards to gather a spray on the side of the house. "Don't you hope so, too?" he went on, as she did not answer.

"What is the use of hoping?" she replied, tugging viciously at a tough stalk.

"You don't care, you mean?" he said.

"Perhaps not."

"But I do."

No answer.

"You don't believe me?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Look here," he said, throwing away his cigarette and speaking rather roughly, "do you know, you make me savage when you doubt my word like that. What have I done that you shouldn't believe me?"

She faced him, leaning against the balustrade, and busily arranged her little bunch of ivy-leaves, with no answer but a provoking smile.

"Miss Aylmer, look me straight in the face and tell me I don't care whether I see you again or not."

She did not look up.

"You can't," he said with a laugh. "Never mind; I'll prove it to you yet. Go and get your things on, and we will start for our walk."

"I must ask your sister if I may first."

"Oh, she won't mind ; but come along. We'll find her, and I'll promise to take good care of you."

At the door of Lady Fanny's room a servant with an empty salver stepped back to let them pass, and when they went in she was in the act of opening a telegram. Captain Taylor was playing with her fat pug on the sofa. A scream of joy sprang from her lips when she had read the telegram. She danced about the room, waving it above her head. "Joy ! joy !" she cried. "Good old Marsterses ! Three cheers for the Marsterses ! They are going to give a dance ! Look, read it, Captain Taylor."

She flung him the telegram, and he read out an invitation to an impromptu dance on the following Tuesday.

"Isn't it fun !" cried Lady Fanny. "Just what I was longing for ! Of course, you'll all stay. Captain Taylor, I'll never speak to you again if you don't say this minute that you can stay."

"Wild horses shall not drag me away," said the Captain, laying his hand on his heart.

"Gervase ? Miss Aylmer ? You can stay. Oh, what fun it will be ! Let's go and tell Miles."

She danced down the passages to the library, where the rest of the party were informed of the news.

"Delighted, I am sure," said Mr. Adare, looking fondly at his excited wife, "as long as you don't ask me to go."

The others were nearly all delighted to stay on, and Lady Fanny rapidly suggested the names of other guests in place of those who were obliged to leave.

Miss Lacy was one of those who had an engagement which compelled her to leave next day.

"Don't pretend that you're sorry, Fan," she said. "I'm no loss. I haven't got a decent gown, I can't dance, and my ugly face would spoil the look of any ball-room. My dancing days are over."

"Just as you like, dear," said Lady Fan sweetly. "I won't press you to stay if you'd rather not. What a pity poor Agnes had to go away ! Really those fussy old parents of hers ought to be scragged."

"You will stay, won't you ?" Gervase said to Gertrude under cover of the chatter.

"I don't know whether I ought to," said Gertrude. Her heart was beating faster with the sudden hope of a respite, yet she was almost afraid to stay.

"Why not? Do they want you at home?"

"No."

"Then why not stay?"

"I don't know."

"Then just settle to stay."

"I can't resist it," she said. "I should love to stay on."

"That's all right, then," he said, then, addressing his sister in a louder voice, "Fan, Miss Aylmer and I are going to take a walk up to the monument. We shall be back for lunch."

"All right," said Lady Fan. "Take the dogs with you, only don't let Vic hunt."

"Fanny, you really are the biggest donkey I ever came across in the whole course of my existence!" said Miss Lacy in an emphatic whisper as the door closed behind Gervase and Gertrude.

"Good gracious, Bertha! Why?" said Lady Fan.

"Can't you see that that girl is doing all she can to catch your brother?"

"Well, let her try. Gervase can take care of himself."

"It's all very well to say that, but, mark my words, there will be ructions. You were a fool to ask her to stay on for this ridiculous toe-and-heel business. If you had let her go away quietly to-morrow as arranged, it would have been all right; but, depend upon it, she will make the best of the next few days. She is an artful minx."

"I certainly never saw Gervase so infatuated," said Lady Fan. "Perhaps it is rather dangerous, but yet I can't believe he would be such a fool as to—to let it come to anything definite, you know."

"Well, when the fat is in the fire don't say I didn't warn you. I wish I was going to be here to see."

"I'll tell Miles to speak to Gervase," said Lady Fanny, with a comfortable feeling that by so doing she would both do her duty and shift the responsibility on to other shoulders.

To her surprise, her husband took the matter seriously.

"I noticed he was very attentive to Miss Aylmer," he said. "If she is likely to value his attentions at more than they are

worth, I will certainly give him a hint. The idea of anything serious between them is, of course, utterly ridiculous, and Gervase should take care what he is about. She may not know how he is situated."

"Talk to him like a father, dear," said his wife, giving him a butterfly kiss on his forehead and flitting out of the room.

Mr. Adare remembered her injunction with a start as, later in the day, he caught sight of the couple returning from their walk. That there was some necessity for a little timely caution seemed obvious. They both looked so happy, and they were so completely absorbed in each other. Mr. Adare waited till he was alone with Gervase in the smoking-room.

"Gervase," he said, laying down his paper, "the amount of your income remains the same as it has been for the last few years?"

"Yes, and precious little it is, too," replied Gervase, gloomily.

"And you have no other prospects?"

"What are you driving at, Miles? You know my affairs as well as I do myself. What do you want to know?"

"Forgive me, old chap. It seems deuced interfering, but—er—does Miss Aylmer know anything about the extent of your income, etc.?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. Why should she? What do you mean?"

"Don't get excited, old fellow. You know I never interfere in other people's affairs, but the women have been talking, it seems."

"What do they say?"

"Oh, merely women's talk. But I thought I'd just give you a hint to be a bit careful, old chap. See? Don't be angry."

"Of course not, Miles." Gervase took up the poker, and made a ferocious attack upon a lump of coal. "The truth of the matter is," he said desperately, after a pause, "I believe I am more than half in love with the girl."

"Dear me, that's serious," said Mr. Adare.

"At all events," went on Gervase, "I never met a girl I liked better. I never was a ladies' man, as you know; I despise fellows who fall in and out of love as easily as they change their

shirts. I never could understand the fun of it, that sort of tomfoolery. But I confess," he went on with a vicious lunge at the coal, "that I have felt more like making a fool of myself over this girl than I ever did before. By Jove, Miles, there is something about her that fascinates me. I never met any woman like her. I daresay you think I'm a fool, and when I'm away from her, I am surprised at myself. And yet I catch myself longing to be with her again. She has such a way of drawing one out and making one feel that she really is interested in all one says that, upon my word, before I know where I am, we've been talking for a couple of hours, and that old dragon, Bertha Lacy, is glaring at us, with a face on her fit to turn the cream sour."

Mr. Adare listened thoughtfully.

"I know what every one thinks," said Gervase angrily, "that she is trying to catch me, but they are absolutely mistaken. To begin with, I'm not worth catching, and if I was, she's not the girl to try and do it. Good heavens, if you knew the way she treats me sometimes! Ice isn't in it! She'd freeze a salamander, and just as I think I am getting a bit forrarder, too! Why, she'll take hold of the curb and pull me up and nearly break my jaw."

"H'm!"

Mr. Adare chewed his own tongue thoughtfully.

"I know you think I'm crazy, old chap," said Gervase, getting up from his chair and standing restlessly with his shoulders against the mantelpiece, "and I daresay I am, but not in the way you think. I'm not making a fool of her; it's all the other way. I'm the victim."

"To what extent do you intend to be victimized?" inquired Mr. Adare.

He took a cigarette from a silver box, and offered one to Gervase.

"That's as she pleases," said Gervase gloomily.

He took the cigarette absently.

"Any of the fellows in your regiment married?" said Mr. Adare as he leant forward to light a spill and handed it on to Gervase when he had lit his cigarette.

"Confound you, Miles," he said, with a half-laugh, "why do you keep suggesting these disagreeable practical details?"

I know well enough I'm not in a position to marry at present."

"The life of a soldier's wife in a regiment such as yours can hardly be an attractive one, I should imagine," said Mr. Adare.

"I might get an adjutancy," said Gervase, relighting his cigarette.

"Well enough for the first year or two, but—think of the inevitable consequences. Two people can live on what is totally inadequate to keep a nursery going."

"Hang it, I know all that."

"Miss Aylmer may be of an economical turn of mind, and she has not been accustomed to luxury, I daresay, but with a fellow of your extravagant tastes, always been accustomed to the best of everything—well, you have never thought much about the pounds; you would find it a devilish hard grind to have to look sharp after the pence. The *pence*, my dear fellow!"

"Curse the money!" said Gervase savagely.

"Yes. Things are badly arranged in this world," said Mr. Adare. "You, with nothing a year, want to marry some one else with nothing a year, while I daresay your next-door neighbour with half a million is eating his heart out because the girl of his choice with another half-million can't put up with the cut of his nose or the shape of his legs."

"Sickening," said Gervase.

"Granted," said Mr. Adare tranquilly, "but there's reason in it, too. You can't live on love alone, any more than you can on money alone. My advice is, Remain in the ranks of the single, where you are very well off."

Gervase was smoking calmly. He took regular puffs, and watched the rings of smoke as he blew them out of his mouth.

"You're quite right, old chap. You always are," he said with a huge sigh. "I'm not absolutely insane yet. This flame will have to be smothered."

"Without too much use of cold water, I hope? Girls don't care about shower-baths, as a rule, I believe," said Mr. Adare.

"No fear," said Gervase. "She's taken good care of that, I can tell you. Why, that's just what makes me so mad."

"Ah, well," said Mr. Adare philosophically, "it will be all the same a month or two hence."

"I suppose it will," said Gervase gloomily.

"Only just don't think of it too much," said Mr. Adare. "Bless you, there's nothing important but what thinking makes it more so, as Hamlet says, only in rather better English. Things get out of proportion when one thinks of them, they get out of focus, and can't fairly be judged. Now go and have fifty up with Herries, instead of skulking off to the drawing-room. Put Miss Aylmer out of your head, and your heart will take care of itself."

Gervase assented doubtfully. His reason told him that Miles's advice was excellent.

Mr. Adare went to his wife's room immediately after his interview with Gervase.

"My dear," he said with comic gravity, "this business is really rather serious. I am thankful there is such a short time left. If we are careful, I think it can be tided over safely. The only thing to be done is to keep them apart as much as possible."

"Good gracious, you don't mean to say he is such a fool as to—to—be such a donkey," cried Lady Fanny, unable to express her horror. "I shouldn't have thought it of Gervase," she added solemnly.

"No harm is done as yet," said Mr. Adare, "but there is no saying what might or might not happen. I spoke as strongly as I dared, but dared not say too much. It was like walking on eggs."

"Do you mean to say he told you he really—really—was fond of the girl—seriously?" said Lady Fanny, with dilated eyes.

"It is touch and go," said Mr. Adare. "Opposition would be the very worst thing. He would just go straight off and propose, but I appealed as delicately as possible, with a faint suggestion of ridicule, to his common sense, and I think the practical side of him sees how impossible anything serious would be. But he is just the fellow to rush to the romantic extreme, if he was once started. He is immensely infatuated, though I think hardly in love. That would come with time, and mercifully the time is short. I only hope the girl has kept a firm grip of her heart. According to him, *she has*."

"Oh, you bet she has!" said Lady Fanny excitedly. "Bertha *said* she was a minx."

"No. Now, don't be spiteful, my dear," said Mr. Adare. "It sounds too much like the spite that all women are supposed to feel for each other. I don't like my wife to share the common failings of vulgar women."

"Dear old man," she said, laying her head on his shoulder. "How dear and good you are. You never will hear a word against any one. I believe if I told you with my own lips that Captain Taylor had asked me to run away with him, you would not believe me."

"I should believe you, darling, because I know nothing but the truth ever passes these pretty red lips." He kissed them. "But I shouldn't blame you. I should simply kick him out of the house."

She laughed merrily.

"Poor man! How funny he would look tumbling head foremost down the steps, with his coat-tails flying! I've half a mind to tempt him to insult me, just for the fun of seeing you do it."

"You frivolous little April-face! I believe you will laugh at my funeral."

"*Don't, Miles!*"

"Hullo, darling what is it, eh? Lift up your face."

There was a pause, and his wife's face remained hidden.

"Fan, darling, I hope you're not blistering my collar with hot tears. Are you? I thought I felt a drop trickle down my neck just now."

Lady Fanny lifted up her face and shook him by the shoulders.

"Miles, you're a *beast*," she said with great emphasis.

CHAPTER IX.

AGNES would have been very much shocked if she could have seen what Gertrude wrote in her diary that evening. Fortunately she did not guess the existence of such depravity as lay hidden beneath the covers of the book to which Gertrude confided her most secret thoughts.

"January 20th.—I have not had a moment since I came to this delightful house to write in my diary, but it doesn't much matter,

for when it is all over, and I am back again at home, I shall have plenty of time to live my visit over again. There is no fear that I shall forget a single incident. I have never been so happy in my life, never ! Nothing is wanting to complete my enjoyment. Oh, the wild, delirious joy of living in such moments as these, that comes to one perhaps two or three times in one's life ! Yet what am I so ridiculously rapturous, so wildly excited, about ? Viewed from an outsider's point of view, there is nothing unusual. Hundreds of girls have experiences such as I am undergoing now every year or oftener in their lives. They think nothing of it, and I am a fool to make so much out of so little. What is it that excites me to such a pitch of rapture ? First, I am staying in a splendidly comfortable, luxurious house. I used to think I did not care about things of that sort, but I find I do enjoy a fire in my bedroom, plenty of candles, hot water, a great, comfortable bed (even the frills on the pillows please my weak mind). If I wanted to excuse my enjoyment of such trifles, I should say it was because I have a soul that yearns for the ideal even in little things, that revels in perfection of beauty and comfort, that loves to be surrounded by all that is pleasing to the most refined tastes, but I needn't trouble to be sarcastic at my own expense.

"Enough to record the simple fact that I love those great, handsome rooms, full of lovely pictures and things, which nobody dreams of looking at except Mr. Adare. I am not even ashamed to own that the food pleases me.

"Well, then, after the material comforts, which after all only please a very small part of me, I enjoy being one of this party of nice, amusing, well-bred people. They may not be clever or particularly intellectual as individuals ; they laugh and talk from morning till night, and all seem to be the best of friends. Some one is always saying something that makes one laugh. I love being made to laugh, and I am always laughing here. Lady Fanny is the perfection of a hostess ; she allows us all to do just what we please. I am sure she hates nothing in the world but dulness and a lack of men, and wherever she is there is not much fear of either.

"Mr. Adare looks on with a twinkle in his eye, as if he loved to see people enjoying themselves.

"Well, I am not such a fool as not to know that all this would

go for nothing, might all be the same, and yet be dull, if it were not for one thing—yes, if it were not for *him*, the central figure, the real source of all my enjoyment. Such a smart, good-looking, popular, clever man! He is infatuated with me. I know it. I hate him now and then, or rather I hate to think that he is only amusing himself with me. I want him to be the victim. When we part it shall not be my fault if I am the only one to suffer. He will forget first, of course. I can only make a faint impression, but I will make it as deep as I can. Yes, why shouldn't I?

"I will enjoy myself in my own way, though it may be madness. I shall pay for it afterwards, when I have nothing to think of but this short week of *life* and love. Yes, we will play at love. He is ready, and so am I. Who shall set the limits, how far we shall or shall not go? I long that he should say, 'I love you;' that he should kiss me. Why not? I am in love with him. Am I to go through life without a single taste of passion—the glorious passion of love, which, after all, is the greatest thing in the world, the one thing every soul yearns for, the only thing worth living for? Why should I not have this one taste, now while the cup is held to my lips for one brief moment? It may be the one chance I shall have in my life. It is my fate to marry—I cannot write his name—I hate him at the moment. I will be a good and faithful wife to him, but I must not allow myself to love this other man first. It will soon be over. Then there will be a taste of ashes in my mouth for God knows how long."

Gertrude had been writing in a frenzy of excitement. The wild scrawl was almost illegible, so great was her haste, but at this point she paused and flung herself back in her chair.

The firelight played over her lithe young figure, where the blood was coursing as it only courses in hot, passionate youth; it shone on her face, white and drawn with emotion, in her dark eyes, on her black hair, strewn over her shoulders.

She took up her pencil again, and wrote slower.

"What an awful creature any one who read what I have just written would think me! They would not know that this fiery furnace is hidden beneath a good thick crust of shyness and reserve. Much as I long that Gervase should in some way
as his infatuation—I am not blind enough to call it love—I

believe my reserve, my habit of appearing colder and harder than I really am, is a very safe protection. The animal part of me longs to be embraced by him, but, thank goodness, the more spiritual part of me is shy, and shrinks back almost involuntarily. I am not sure that it is the spirit, either. I think it is only the instinct born of conventionality. Will conventionality prove a strong enough wall against the siege of desire? *I hope not.* It is pitiful to think that anything could prevent me from going on to the very end, now that I have once started. Weakness is the one sin.

“The old teaching about yielding to temptation comes back to me. Very well, if I am yielding to temptation, I choose to do so. I do not deceive myself; I am willing to pay the price. It is a matter between me and my conscience. How I should look back and regret and despise myself in after-years, if I drew back now, and gave up this fleeting passion which has come to me! It comes to me as an experience, a bitter-sweet experience, which will be an outstanding event in my life. I suppose some people would say I was doing a stronger and nobler thing if I gave it up, but whichever way I look at it, the result is the same, only in the one case I eat the apple and have a short-lived joy in its bitter sweetness, while in the other I get nothing for my pains. Gervase, Gervase, I must have your kiss on my lips; I must feel your arms round me, if only a moment—oh, God!

“It seems to me there is some method in my madness, for never for a moment do I dream of a lasting love between us—of marriage. No, such happiness is not for me. It would be too good, too beautiful. Life is not like that. It is for the most part like a desert, with green oases now and then. To have Gervase, my beautiful, strong, splendid Gervase, for my husband is too much. Such bliss is reserved for some one who will not appreciate it, who will take it quite calmly and rationally, probably Agnes. He is only an ordinary human being to her, as *my* fate is to me. Heavens, shall I ever make up my mind to marry him, having known Gervase? It is fortunate that Time, good old Father Time, dulls our senses and deadens our desires.

“It maddens me to think that nothing but money—sordid, horrible money—keeps us apart. He has nothing, I know, perhaps five or six hundred a year; I have nothing. We cannot live on nothing, more's the pity. So it is hopeless. Besides,

there are other obstacles. He belongs to one sphere, I to another. Our lives are just like two lives that have crossed at right angles. They never can meet again. It seems such a simple thing—to meet again—but time goes on, other interests crop up, things come in the way, one has few mutual friends, and in the meantime something definite must be done. So life goes on, and the hope of meeting dies away; the *desire to meet* dies too. That is the saddest part of all.

“What a fool I am!—I despise myself.”

The last words were written with sudden, savage haste, with an angry scrawl of the pencil at the end. She threw it down, flung the book into her box, and began to dress for dinner.

(To be continued.)

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A Modern Comedy of Errors.

By DARLEY DALE,

Author of "THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH," "THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT," etc.

CHAPTER XVII.

"RICHARD'S HIMSELF AGAIN."

SIR PETER'S carriage was at the station when the doctor reached London ; he jumped in, pulled a note-book out of the pocket on the door, consulted it, then put his head out of the window and ordered the coachman to drive to a patient's house instead of going home. He paid a visit to this patient, directed the coachman to drive to another at some distance, visited this case, then called at a doctor's house, saw the doctor, and finally went home.

He entered his own house in a great hurry, sent for Drummond, asked for his letters and messages, tore open the envelopes, scribbled his answers in brief on the back, sat down to his writing-table and after writing the following letter gave it to Drummond to be posted :

"Friday evening.

"DEAR MRS. HALKETT,

"I shall not be able to dine with you next week. I am very busy. In haste.

"Yours truly,

"PETER DURSLEY."

"Call a hansom, Drummond ; I shall dine at the club to-night," said the doctor, running up to his room, three or four stairs at a time.

"Dashed if this is not the master this time. Mr. Paul did it

very well ; but he don't get through so much in a day as Sir Peter can in half-a-day if he likes. I don't know what he wants to write to Mrs. Halkett about, though, so soon as he is home ; that is more like Mr. Paul. He has come from Eastwich, I know, whoever he is. I shall see if he smokes, if he don't, I shall know it is Sir Peter himself again," thought Drummond as he saw the doctor into a hansom.

At the club that evening Sir Peter Dursley astonished his friends by smoking a cigar ; he played a rubber quite in his usual form, though none of the three friends who were to dine with him the following night were present. He was chaffed about his speech on the enfranchisement of women, and told that he would have no more advanced women among his patients. An intimate acquaintance inquired for Paul and learnt that he was bearing his imprisonment very well, and intended to set up in London as a surgeon as soon as he had disposed of his country practice.

"He will do very well as a surgeon. He hated the work of a general practitioner ; he is a very clever surgeon and is an F.R.C.S. ; besides he has some French diplomas. I have always said he was lost in the country ; after all, this sad business may turn out to be, barring Sir John Dane's death, the best thing for Paul in the long run ; it has roused him, and that was what he wanted."

"That mistake was not his of course ?"

"No, it was my sister's ; she was used to Paul's writing, and unused to mine, so was flurried ; at least, that's how I account for it," said the doctor, who was rarely so communicative as this on family or professional matters to an outsider.

"Dursley is coming out more, he is less reserved ; he is getting over his wife's death," was the remark made on him after he had left.

The next day the doctor was very busy, he had a good many patients in the morning, and he was out visiting and attending meetings the whole afternoon, only returning in time to dress to receive his guests.

"It is Sir Peter," said Drummond to himself as he received his master's orders about the wine.

General Malcolmson and his two friends were very much on the alert, particularly the former, who, until they sat down to

whist, was not sure whether it was Peter or Paul who was entertaining them. When the cards were brought out, it soon became evident it was Sir Peter on this occasion, for he played an excellent game, though some of his little tricks and ways of shuffling, for instance, were less marked than usual.

It was Sir Peter, they were all inwardly agreed, and if Sir Peter to-night, they argued it must have been Sir Peter the other night, for they knew nothing of the journey to Eastwich ; and they went home with all their suspicions removed.

On Sunday Mrs. Halkett waited in vain for Sir Peter to drop in to pot-luck, either in the middle of the day or in the evening ; and this coupled with the note she had received backing out of the engagement to take her to the theatre, convinced her that she had a great deal to do before she landed her fish.

"I must run down between this and Wednesday morning. I must fast, which I hate, and I must be very plaintive and suffering," she told herself as she sat watching in vain for Sir Peter on Sunday evening.

"Mrs. Halkett is coming this morning, Drummond, by appointment, at eleven. I can't see her till twelve," said the doctor on Wednesday morning.

"Very good, sir," said Drummond, who by this time had no doubt about his master's identity.

At twelve o'clock Mrs. Halkett, whose health was not improved by an hour's waiting, was shown into Sir Peter's consulting-room, to find the great doctor looking very cold and reserved, and quite unlike the man who had dined with her a week ago.

"I am very much pressed for time to-day. I was sorry to keep you waiting."

"Oh ! Sir Peter, what have I done ? Do tell me. How have I offended you ? Has any one been calumniating me, or what is the meaning of this coldness, this estrangement ?"

"I am conscious of none," said the doctor

"Oh ! but there must be something. After your goodness to me the other evening, nothing you said should prevent you from taking me to the theatre to-morrow ; it was your own proposition, and then you promised faithfully to come on Sunday."

"My dear madam, I assure you, you are mistaken ; I did nothing of the kind."

"Oh! cruelty thy name is man," said Mrs. Halkett, bursting into tears.

This was decidedly awkward; what on earth was he to do? She was quite capable of going into hysterics if he did not pacify her; he must unbend a little and get her out of the house, and then tell Drummond if he ever admitted her again it would be at the risk of losing his situation.

"After what passed that evening," sobbed Mrs. Halkett.

"What the dickens did pass? Was Paul fool enough to commit himself in any way, I wonder?" thought the doctor.

"Look here, Mrs. Halkett, you have come to consult me professionally to-day; you are evidently not well, so let us confine ourselves to business. Let me feel your pulse. Just as I expected. Now I'll give you a prescription, and we will leave all the rest to a more fitting time and place. I have several important cases to see to-day; in fact I am so busy I hardly know which way to turn. Take this three times a day; Drummond shall put you into a hansom; good-bye."

And before Mrs. Halkett had time to remonstrate, she found herself gently led to the hall and the door of the consulting room closed behind her.

"A pretty fix I am in with this woman; I must see Paul and find out exactly what he said and did, for if I don't take care I shall have her bringing an action for breach of promise of marriage. Good gracious! Imagine that woman the stepmother of my Nona. I shall be forced to marry in self-defence. Let me see, this is Wednesday. I shall run down to Eastwich and see Paul on Friday, the governor said there would never be any difficulty; on Friday those girls will be there. I wish to see more of Bertha Dane, there is something very nice about her."

"If you please, sir, that French gentleman you saw last week has called again. What am I to do?" interrupted Drummond.

"Send him to Dr. Philippe."

"He won't go; he can speak a little English, but he insists on seeing you."

"I suppose I must see him, then," said Sir Peter, thinking the man must have spoken English to his substitute last week, but to his horror the French baron entered with a torrent of French, not one word of which could the great doctor understand.

In vain for him to protest he did not speak French; the baron

politely, but firmly, assured him he spoke like a native, as Sir Peter managed to make out, more from M. le Baron's gestures than his words.

What on earth was he to do? He looked up the case, felt the man's pulse, sounded his heart, wrote him a prescription, and seeing the baron was losing his temper, and evidently considering his ignorance of French was assumed, he endeavoured to blurt out the truth.

"Ce n'était pas moi. Mon frère parle Français, pas moi," stammered Sir Peter, and his accent was sufficient to assure the baron of the truth of his statement.

At last, finding he could not get out of Sir Peter, either his brother's address, or an answer to any questions concerning him, the Frenchman departed, putting the fee Sir Peter refused back in his pocket.

"Was there ever such an idiot as Paul? It is small thanks to him that we were not found out; in fact it is my firm belief that we shall be discovered; only the difficulty will be for any one to prove it. I'll make him make a clean breast of everything on Friday, for I am living with a volcano open at my feet. First the club, then Mrs. Halkett, now this gentleman; I tremble as to what new mine will be sprung upon me next. Upon my word, had I believed it possible Paul could have been so reckless, I would never have run the risk, not even to save him from the illness I fully expect a month's imprisonment will bring on. I could have stood the six weeks well enough, but he spends so much more time in the open air than I do, he is sure to succumb to the confinement. However, we dare not repeat the experiment; the marvel will be if we have escaped detection this time."

Thus thinking, Sir Peter looked carefully through his books, to see where Paul had been and whom he had visited and seen during the ten days he was in London, and then took care to see all these people again as soon as possible, to remove any lurking suspicion that they might have entertained.

Meanwhile he was revolving a scheme for setting Paul up in London as a surgeon; he was full of it and determined to do his utmost to persuade his brother to agree to it; indeed he told himself this was the real object of his journey to Eastwich on Friday—this and to find out all the mischief Paul had contrived to get into those ten eventful days. He would not confess even to

himself, that the main object of his journey was to see Bertha Dane again, and his ulterior motive to place an obstacle between himself and Mrs. Halkett.

He hoped to time his arrival at the gaol so as to catch Bertha and Chloe before they visited Paul, and to arrange to have tea with them afterwards at a confectioner's. To his surprise, however, on reaching Liverpool Street on Friday morning, whom should he meet but Bertha and Chloe, getting into a third-class carriage for Eastwich.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PAUL IS VISITED.

BERTHA DANE went home, after her second visit to the imprisoned doctor, in a state of bewilderment, coupled with a feeling of intense disappointment. It never occurred to her that the brothers had changed places a second time ; she believed Sir Peter was still in gaol, but what she could not understand was the difference in his manner to her and to Chloe on their first and on their second visits.

On their first visit, as we have seen, Sir Peter had devoted his time and attention to her and had taken but little notice of Chloe ; on their second visit the prisoner had had eyes for no one but Chloe, and had scarcely spoken to Bertha.

What was the meaning of this sudden change ?

Was Sir Peter anxious to keep Chloe in ignorance of the vicarious punishment he was undergoing ?

On their first visit it had seemed to Bertha that Heaven was opening before her eyes, and that one of its best gifts was already on its way to her ; on their second visit the doors of Heaven were closed and veiled with a cloud through whose dull, grey depths no ray of sunlight could penetrate.

In plain prose, Sir Peter had treated her, on her first visit, with a deference and courtesy which were as new in her experience of men as they were delightful ; his evident interest in her was very flattering ; on her second visit the prisoner had taken no more notice of her than he would have done of Constance or Augusta, and had concentrated all his interest on Chloe.

Hence Bertha's bewilderment and disappointment.

Both were increased by Chloe, whose first remark on leaving the prison was :

"Bertha, I am not going to London to-morrow. I am not going till Mr. Dursley is released."

"But Augusta has taken lodgings for us, we shall be obliged to go. Why not?" said Bertha.

"Because I want to keep my promise, and visit him once a week while he is in prison; after he is released, I shall never see him again in all probability. I wonder how I shall live; I know how I shall die, fiddling. I shall live to fiddle and die fiddling. Oh! Bertha, what a queer world it is. I am as happy as a bird to-day."

"Are you, dear?"

"Yes, he was himself again this week; at least, I think the change was in him and not in me. It was his voice, his look, his touch:

'Und seiner Rede Zauberfluss,

'Sein Händedruck, und ach! sein Kuss!'

I am glad you don't know German, Bertha; that only means in English, I am not going to London to-morrow."

"We shall be obliged to go," said the puzzled Bertha.

Last week she had understood what Chloe had told her about Sir Peter having no power over her to charm her by his voice or manner. This week she could not understand why Chloe felt all Paul's influence over her as keenly as ever.

That evening, at dinner, Augusta inquired what train Bertha and Chloe intended to travel to London by the next day.

"We are not going to-morrow; we shan't go for a month," said Chloe.

"Excuse me, Chloe, but you are going to-morrow, or not at all. I have yielded to you much against my own judgment in this, and, now that everything has been satisfactorily arranged, I insist upon your going to-morrow or giving up this very mad scheme entirely. I shall be better pleased if you choose the latter course."

"So shall I, though, of course, Augusta and I will do our best to be bright and cheerful in your absence. Still, we shall feel just a little wee bit dull sometimes when we find ourselves alone in this big house with only the pumas and jaguars and the birds to talk to," said Constance brightly.

"Could I go alone until Chloe is ready to join me?" said Bertha.

"Certainly not ; you are going entirely on Chloe's account. If she no longer wishes to go, we must compensate the lodging-house keeper and give up the lodgings," said Augusta.

"Which shall it be, Chloe? You must decide, Bertha appears to be merely a tool in your hands," said Constance.

"Constance has decided me. We will go to London, Bertha, to-morrow as early as you please," said Chloe, whose love for her two elder sisters was not one of her good points.

That evening Chloe rushed into Bertha's room to inform her why she had yielded so easily to the pressure Augusta had brought to bear on her.

"Bertha ! you dear tool, as Constance calls you ! I have settled it all. We will come down to Eastwich every Friday and visit the dear, dear prisoners ; we will take return tickets and we will travel third-class ; we can do it in the day. If you refuse to come with me I shall come alone."

"Chloe ! what would the others say if they knew we did it ?"

"They won't know, unless they should take it into their heads to visit Paul in our absence, which Heaven and all the powers therein forbid."

"But won't Mr. Dursley think it rather odd if we come so far to visit him ?"

"He won't know, either. He will imagine we are still at home, and there is no need to undeceive him," said Chloe as she skipped back to her own room.

Thus it came about that when Sir Peter got to Liverpool Street, the following Friday, he found Bertha and Chloe on the platform.

"There is Sir Peter Dursley. He is bent on the same errand as we ourselves, I do believe," said Chloe.

Bertha, believing Sir Peter to be safely lodged in Eastwick gaol, at the expense of his country, concluded it was Mr. Dursley, but kept her own counsel.

To her surprise the doctor showed more pleasure at seeing her than he did at seeing Chloe, and it was Bertha, and not Chloe, to whom he handed a pile of papers, and whom he covered with his fur rug.

The great doctor, of course, travelled first-class, and insisted on changing their tickets for them, and, by tipping the guard, secured a carriage to themselves. He put the two girls into the

corner seats facing the engine, and seated himself opposite Bertha.

Chloe appeared to think it quite natural that Sir Peter should only address a few remarks from time to time to her ; no doubt such a clever man considered her a frivolous little fool, and, from his point of view he was, in her opinion, quite right to entertain himself with Bertha's more solid qualities. As a matter of fact, after learning where they were living and why, and asking and receiving permission to call upon them, Sir Peter devoted himself to the perusal of some medical papers, only now and then looking up to see that Bertha was comfortable or to point out some object of interest they were passing.

The train by which they were travelling was express, and Chloe, who was never so quiet as on a railway journey, lay back in her seat enjoying the rapid movement, and wondered whether a brilliant musical career would satisfy all the longings and aspirations of her heart and soul, and, young as she was, came to the conclusion that it certainly would not.

"It is a very good makeshift for happiness, like any other career ; but if Miss Dursley had never made that fatal mistake I should never have thought of it, which, I suppose, proves it was not the end for which I was created, though it will have to be the goal for which I shall live ; but I suppose I am not the first person who was created for one purpose and lived for another."

Chloe's meditations were interrupted here by a halt of ten minutes, which Sir Peter occupied in getting himself and the girls a hasty luncheon. They reached Eastwich soon after two o'clock, and drove straight to the gaol, having arranged that Sir Peter should go first to see his brother, while Bertha and Chloe visited the other prisoners as usual.

Mr. Dursley's cell was on the first floor near the stairs, and as Sir Peter, followed by Chloe and Bertha, turned into the corridor into which the door opened, they found themselves face to face with Augusta and Constance, who had evidently just come out of the cell.

"Sir Peter ! this is indeed an unexpected pleasure," began Augusta, but the next moment she caught sight of her sisters, whom she believed to be in London, and she stopped short.

"Bertha ! Chloe ! What are you doing here ?" she exclaimed in amazement.

"What are you two doing, you mean?" said Chloe, dumb-founded at meeting her sisters.

"Visiting the prisoners; we have just been trying to cheer Mr. Dursley up," said Constance in her bright way.

"You! you! You cats!" cried Chloe in a fury.

To think that she and Bertha had actually come all the way from London to Eastwich to visit Paul, and to find they had been forestalled by Augusta and Constance, was most annoying, for Chloe knew she and Bertha would not now be admitted, so they had had all their journey for nothing. Chloe inherited her father's peppery temper, and as she spoke her black eyes flashed fire, and she stamped one little foot on the stone floor and looked as if she would have liked to have annihilated Augusta on the spot.

"What a little virago," thought Sir Peter as he went on to see his brother.

"Chloe, your conduct is most reprehensible," said Augusta.

"And so uncalled for. What have we done to displease you, Chloe dear?" asked Constance.

"What are you doing here, Bertha? That is what I cannot understand," said Augusta.

"We have come to visit the prisoners as usual on Friday; we promised Mr. Dursley to come," said Bertha.

"And we have kept our promise, and it is no use. You two busybodies have been to see him and now we shan't be admitted. You ought to pay our fares for us," said Chloe, still very angry.

"It was hardly necessary to come so far," began Augusta.

"For so little I quite agree; having come, though, I mean to see Mr. Dursley, if possible; so come along, Bertha, with me to the governor's and let us see if we can't persuade him to admit us," said Chloe, recovering her temper and her spirits, and leaving Augusta and Constance to their own devices.

The governor was not at home, so their last hope of being admitted to Paul's cell that day was frustrated.

"What shall we do, Bertha? What two utter fools we do look! We have travelled one hundred miles for nothing. Oh, those two charming sisters of ours, how I love them both!"

"They meant it kindly, Chloe," said Bertha gravely.

"I know they did. I am a wicked little wretch to talk so of my sisters; if Constance were not quite so cheerful, and Augusta

a trifle less proper, they would be bearable. I wonder what Mr. Dursley said when they visited him. I am dying to know."

"I don't know what he said, but I am sure he thought it was your doing."

"Of course he did ; that is why I am so angry, for I don't want him to think that. I want to be nice to him as long as he is in prison ; I shall be odious enough when he comes out. But what are we going to do, Bertha ?"

"Visit the other prisoners, I suppose, dear, till Sir Peter comes out ; he won't be more than twenty minutes now."

"You can if you like, I shan't. I shall stay outside and wait on the bridge for you ; it is too lovely to be indoors," said Chloe, sniffing up the fresh air and looking with pleasure on the city below her, with its cathedral, and the green fields beyond the city, rolling away into the blue distance.

The fruit trees were in blossom, the grass greening, and the hedges sprouting, while the "passionate buds" of the elms and oaks were yearning to burst forth ; all nature was waking from its long winter night and the birds were singing the year's matins.

Chloe walked slowly away from the castle, down the hill on which it stood, towards the bridge which spanned the river below.

"I wish I were a bird. Happy things with no cares and no troubles. Why wasn't I a bird, instead of a girl, whose lover through criminal carelessness caused the death of the dearest old father in the world ? I can never, never marry him, and the worst of it is I can never, never forget him. If he goes to the uttermost parts of the earth, when he leaves here and I never see him again, his image will be as clear in my mind as it is now."

So thinking Chloe, who had now reached the bridge, leant over the parapet and caught a glimpse of her own reflection in the river below ; a little pale face with red lips and black eyes, a little slight figure in deep mourning with a large bunch of arum lilies in her hand.

"I forgot the flowers ; I must go back and give them to the gaoler," said Chloe, leaving the bridge and walking up the hill again to the prison.

She had not reached the outer gate, when it opened, and she saw Sir Peter coming out alone. He raised his hat and quickened his step at the sight of her, and to her own surprise, Chloe felt her heart beat faster and the hot blood rush into her face.

"How like he is to Paul!" she thought as they approached each other.

"Where is Bertha?" she asked when they met.

"Chloe!" answered a voice, and the voice was not that of Sir Peter, neither was the light in the eyes one Chloe had ever seen in Sir Peter's eyes.

"Paul! Mr. Dursley!" exclaimed Chloe in amazement.

"Yes, it is I: I am supposed to be Peter and to have gone to Eastwich for some medicine for myself; I must get back in time for Peter to catch his train back to London."

"But how did you manage it?" asked Chloe, who was now walking towards the city with her companion.

"The warders don't know us apart, and we arranged before I was sentenced always to dress exactly alike, down to the minutest detail, when Peter came to visit me."

"But are you really ill or was the medicine only an excuse?"

"I am really not well, I have no appetite, I can't sleep, and my spirits, which are generally pretty good, are very bad; but it is nothing of any consequence, only when I was disappointed of seeing you to-day, I felt as if I could not endure another week's imprisonment and remain sane. I have learnt one thing, since I have been in gaol."

"What is that?" said Chloe.

"That there is no such thing as time. We mark it off into days and hours and weeks and years, but some minutes are hours and some days weeks; it is a year since I last saw you, not eight days."

"Don't talk nonsense. Just tell me how you felt when my sisters visited you to-day; and when we have been for this medicine, we will go to a pastrycook's and eat ices."

"You will have to lend me some money, then. I have not a sou on me. I forget to ask Peter to lend me some; he will repay you."

"Of course," said Chloe, handing Paul some silver, "and now tell me about the visit of Augusta and Constance."

"Well, my warder came in and asked me if I wished to see the Miss Danes; I answered, of course, and I remember now there was a twinkle in his eye as he admitted not the only Miss Dane in the world for me. I ——"

"Bertha you mean, of course," interrupted Chloe.

"But your two elder sisters," said Paul, not heeding the interruption.

"Weren't you delighted?"

"I was never in such a rage in my life; I inwardly cursed the warder for his stupidity, and I fear my reception of Miss Dane and Miss Constance was not very cordial; though I did my best to hide my disg—disappointment."

"What did they say?"

"Miss Constance irritated me the most; she was so exceedingly cheerful, and so bent on making the best of things. She saw a branch of a tree just coming into leaf hanging over the wall; she had to climb upon a chair to see it, but it afforded her immense comfort; she held forth for five minutes on that branch."

"Constance is too provoking. What else?"

"She regretted I had not any mice to tame and make companions of: as I happen to have a particular horror of mice, I could not share her regret. Then she discovered my window with its bars looked south, and thought that an advantage, for which I ought to sing *Te Deums* night and day. Her crowning absurdity was, that though no doubt I did find the days a little long, still she thought I must be glad to have a quiet time to myself in which to collect my thoughts, as a doctor's life was lived for others, and left him so little time for meditation."

"I wish I had been there. That is exactly like Constance; she really is most trying," said Chloe.

Here the conversation was interrupted by their arrival at the chemist's and was not resumed till they found themselves discussing ices in a pastrycook's shop, where they had to talk in undertones and to sit close together for fear of being overheard.

Paul was for the time in a fool's paradise. First of all there was the delicious sensation of being free, even though only for half-an-hour; it was at least a respite: then the fact that Chloe had come all the way from London to see him was, he thought, a proof that she still loved him; and the way in which her face had lighted up, when she recognized him, confirmed this idea.

When he was with her, he hoped she had forgiven him, and that if he waited patiently till the time of mourning for Sir John Dane was over, she would allow him to renew his proposal of marriage; but even in his most sanguine moments he knew that to speak of marriage until that wound was healed would be fatal.

In the night or in times of depression in his cell, he despaired of ever winning her ; his only chance, he then thought, was if she ever learnt that the mistake was Sir Peter's and not Dorothy's ; then, in that case, Chloe might consider that inasmuch as Dorothy never had made a mistake, he had been justified in trusting her, and therefore was not to blame.

But then Chloe never must know of Sir Peter's blunder ; for it was impossible to say what course she would take if the knowledge ever came to her ears ; and so in his dark moments, Dursley despaired of ever calling Chloe his wife, and it was this, far more than his imprisonment, that was telling upon him.

He was looking careworn, his face was drawn and the dark lines under his eyes spoke of sleeplessness ; and as Chloe sat opposite him eating ices, with only a little round table between them, she noticed how ill he looked, and she determined to be as nice to him that day as possible.

It never occurred to her that it was cruel kindness that she was showing him ; that to visit him during his imprisonment and cut him, or at least cease to see him, after he was released, was as inconsistent as it was unkind ; and yet this was what she told herself continually she meant to do.

"What did Augusta say to you ?" asked Chloe.

"She appeared to be more interested in my brother and his movements than in me ; she was most anxious to know what time I expected him to-day, and whether there was any chance of her meeting him."

"What could it matter to Augusta ? they did not seem to have much to say to each other when they met in the corridor. Sir Peter rushed at once to see you. I heard him tell Bertha he had some most important business to transact with you" said Chloe in a questioning tone.

Mr. Dursley's eyes twinkled

"Yes, he had. Among other items he wants me to set up practice as a surgeon in London."

"And shall you do it ?"

"I think I shall. There is a great deal in all Peter urges ; as he says, 'We fall to rise,' but only if we pick ourselves up after falling ; if we lie still for the world to trample on us, there will be no lack of people to do it."

"And so you mean to make your fall an occasion of rising, is that it?"

"Yes, you see I am a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, and really the only part of my profession I care for is surgery. I had not much scope for that with a country practice; but with Peter to back me up it is probable I may get a post as operating surgeon in one of the London hospitals. It is a life that would suit me; I have always regretted being tied to that country practice, but Dorothy loved the house and place. However, it is clear I must leave Lyneham; indeed I believe Crofton will buy the practice and perhaps the house also."

"And will Miss Dursley live with you in London?" asked Chloe.

"That depends on—circumstances over which I fear I have no control," said Paul, but the look that accompanied the speech told Chloe plainer than words could have done, that he meant that depended on her.

"Do you know the time? It is just four," said Chloe rising.

"And your train leaves at five; I must go back at once or you'll miss it. Will you wait here for your sister?"

"No, I shall be all right; I'll walk with you as far as the bridge," said Chloe, who did not much care if they did miss the train, so long as she and Paul were together.

The consequence of this was as might have been foreseen: Paul took twice as long to walk to the bridge as he would have done had he been alone, and the chances of Sir Peter catching his train were small.

CHAPTER XIX.

BERTHA IS JEALOUS.

SIR Peter found his brother more altered by a week's imprisonment than he had thought possible; but he entered his cell at a very unpropitious moment, namely, just as Augusta and Constance had left it, and Paul was lamenting over his disappointment at not having been favoured with a visit from Chloe.

"How are you?" said Sir Peter, as Mr. Dursley rose to welcome him with a very dejected air.

"Miserable! I can't eat, I can't sleep, and I am as nervous as a woman."

"So I see," said Sir Peter, feeling his brother's pulse, and

inwardly fearing Paul would be seriously ill, before his term of imprisonment was over, if they did not take care.

"You must have some medicine, I'll give you a prescription. Have you had any visitors?"

"Only those two women, Miss Dane and Miss Constance; the latter is enough to depress the merriest clown on earth. It may be fine fun to Chloe to play such a trick on me, but it is anything but fun to me. I have been counting the hours till she should come; a visit from her would have braced me up for this next week's existence—life I can't call it."

"It was no trick of Miss Chloe's; she and Miss Bertha travelled down with me."

"Then for pity's sake let me see her! Chloe here! You don't mean it, Peter?"

"I do, but the warder has just told me you can't have any more visitors to-day. Look here, we will change places for an hour. It is now half-past two; by three o'clock I shall have said all I have to say to you, and then you can go out and get a little fresh air, and if you can find Miss Chloe and persuade her to go with you, all the better. We will make your medicine an excuse. I must catch the five o'clock train, for I have an important engagement this evening."

"All right, I'll be back by four. What have you to say to me?"

"Well, in the first place, I want to know what devilry you have been up to with Mrs. Halkett; how far did you go with her?"

"Upon my word, I don't know. I played the fool the night I dined there, I confess. Why? Is she talking about an action for breach of promise?"

"Breach of promise of marriage! Zounds! Paul! you don't mean to say you seriously made love to the woman."

"On the contrary, I left all that to her, and uncommonly well she did it, too, uncommonly. After all, you know, you will have to marry again."

"I suppose I shall, but Mrs. Halkett is the last woman on earth whom I should choose for my wife. Upon my word, Paul, this is beyond a joke. You might have had a little more consideration for my feelings, and for my position also; the woman will talk, and my prestige will suffer if it is known that I am supposed to have flirted disgracefully with a patient. How on

earth I am to extricate myself from the scrape you have got me into, I don't know ! I really do not know !” said Sir Peter.

“ There is only one way, you must marry some one else, the sooner the better,” said Mr. Dursley. “ In fact, to tell you the truth, I had that object in view.”

“ Pshaw ! I can't say you went to work in a very intelligent way to attain it. Have you had any correspondence with Mrs. Halkett ? ”

“ No, I had the grace to abstain from that.”

“ I must be thankful for that, I suppose ; and that as far as I can gather you made no proposal of marriage ? ”

“ No, I certainly did not make her an offer. I flirted with her, that is the long and the short of it. My advice to you is, to gradually drop her, and announce your engagement to some one else as soon as you can. Was that the object of your visit to-day ? ”

“ Partly,” said Sir Peter, and he then discussed Paul's future course with him, till at three o'clock they asked leave of the warder for Sir Peter to go and get some medicine made up and return with it, to take leave of his brother. Permission was given, and as we know, Mr. Dursley went for the medicine and Sir Peter remained in prison. In the corridor Mr. Dursley met Bertha, whom he stopped to ask where Chloe was, and learning she was outside the prison, he hurried on, merely remarking to Bertha that he was going for some medicine for his brother and should be back by four o'clock.

Now Sir Peter had arranged with Bertha to leave the gaol at a quarter to four, and then to take her and Chloe to an hotel for tea before they returned to London. This new arrangement and the off-hand way in which Paul spoke to her, so different to Sir Peter's attentive manner, puzzled Bertha ; but it never occurred to her to suspect it was Paul, and not Peter, who was so eager to find Chloe.

The prison suddenly struck a chill into her, and she went on with her work there with a very heavy heart until four o'clock, when her head ached, and she felt she must get out into the air.

“ Has Sir Peter Dursley left the castle ? ” she asked of the warder as she entered her name in the visiting book.

“ No, ma'am, he has gone out and has not returned yet ; we expect him every minute.”

Bertha left a message to say she would be at the station before

five o'clock, and then went out, and to her surprise saw Chloe standing on the bridge gazing at the river with Sir Peter, as Bertha supposed, by her side gazing at her.

"They are both in love with Chloe, and no wonder. What man would look at me when Chloe is near? And yet Sir Peter sometimes never looks at Chloe. There will be no time for tea if he is going back to the gaol," thought Bertha as she hurried down the hill towards the pair, who seemed in no hurry to move.

"You are going back to the prison, I hear, Sir Peter, so I came on to get some tea, for my head aches," said Bertha when she joined them.

"You poor Bertha; we two have had a lovely time. We have been eating ices while you have been reading to the prisoners. Come and have some tea with me; and, Sir Peter, make haste, or you will miss the train. I'll take care Bertha is in time. Tell Mr. Dursley I shall come and see him next Friday, and if he admits Constance and Augusta first, I'll never forgive him. *A bientôt*," said Chloe as Paul, finding it was past four, hurried off, while she and Bertha went in the opposite direction.

"Oh, Bertha! I have had such a lovely afternoon; I am so glad we came," began Chloe.

"I can't say I am; my head aches, and we have had this long journey almost in vain, for Augusta and Constance forestalled us with Mr. Dursley, and they could have visited the other prisoners instead of my doing so. I think, as I came here to oblige you, Chloe, you might have waited for me instead of going off alone with Sir Peter," said Bertha.

Chloe's answer was to go into peals of laughter, and to ejaculate between the outbursts: "Oh! you dear solemn old thing. You are too funny."

"I don't see anything funny in it. I think you have both been very unkind, and I intend to let Sir Peter know I think so," said Bertha.

"This is rare fun, she is jealous; she has not the faintest suspicion it was Paul with me. I'll keep up the joke," thought Chloe as they reached a confectioner's, where Bertha solaced herself with some tea.

"Sir Peter is dreadfully afraid he should miss this train; he has some important appointment in London this evening," said Chloe as they sipped their tea.

"Then I wonder he should have wasted his time on the bridge ; he did not seem in any hurry to go."

"No, I don't think he was, but I think we had better go straight to the station and secure places to save time. Have you the tickets?"

"No, Sir Peter has them. But if he is not there in time we must take fresh tickets ; I mean to go back by this train whether Sir Peter does or not."

"I shan't ; I shall wait for him," said Chloe, delighted to find she could rouse Bertha's jealousy ; for though she knew Sir Peter was struck with Bertha, she had hitherto not been sure that Bertha reciprocated the feeling ; but jealousy was, in Chloe's opinion, a certain sign of love.

They reached the station about ten minutes before the train started, but there was no sign of Sir Peter.

"I shall wait five minutes, and then I shall take a third class ticket to London," said Bertha.

"I shan't ; I shall try and keep a first-class carriage for us three," said Chloe

Five minutes elapsed, and looking out of the station, Chloe saw a cab hurrying towards it, which she made no doubt contained Sir Peter.

"Here he comes, Bertha ! Jump into the train ; he will catch it. I shall make them wait for him," said Chloe.

Bertha chose to get into a carriage with two other people already in it, and when Sir Peter bustled in, just as the train was about to start, she scarcely took any notice of him, and received all his polite attentions with great dignity, which so amused Chloe that she could scarcely keep her countenance. Sir Peter was evidently puzzled, and could not understand why Bertha, who had accepted all his care of her in the morning, should be so cold and irresponsive this evening ; he was not conscious of having offended her in any way, for Paul had not told him how he had spent his hour of release. Was it possible that Bertha, whom he had endowed with every virtue under the sun, was after all like other women, capricious and hard to please?

It seemed so. And Sir Peter, resisting all Chloe's efforts to draw him into conversation, sank back in his corner and became as silent and moody as Bertha.

"This is really getting serious ; he is evidently not a man to

be trifled with. I must manage somehow or other to convey to him that he has offended Bertha by eating ices with me and leaving her out in the cold, or he may change his mind about her. Bertha is not like me ; I can afford to have moods, they rather add to my attractions ; Bertha can't afford them because they detract from hers," thought Chloe as the train rolled on, and Sir Peter sat opposite her with his arms folded and his brows knit, while Bertha by her side sat with closed eyes.

"Is your headache worse, Bertha?" said Chloe.

"It is very bad," said Bertha.

"I am so sorry, but I am not surprised, are you, Sir Peter? You know Bertha was visiting the prisoners all the time you and I were eating ices and strolling about enjoying ourselves."

"Indeed! Was she?" said Sir Peter, taking in the situation in a flash, and pulling out his pocket-book he wrote something on the back of his visiting card and handed it to Bertha.

"Try this for your headache," he said.

Bertha took the card and read:

"How could you think I should be so inconsiderate? It was Paul."

Bertha flushed crimson, and looking across at Sir Peter, smiled a pardon on him ; while Chloe, who was near the window, suggested they should change places so that Bertha might feel the air, while she herself pretended to go to sleep. At the next station the other passengers got out of the carriage, and Sir Peter then explained why he had sent his brother out for an hour.

"The confinement is telling on him ; I never saw any one so run down in a week ; I am afraid he will be seriously ill before his time is up. He broods over his troubles, and has no work to distract him. I am very anxious about him," said Sir Peter.

"So am I," thought Chloe, moving to the further end of the carriage. "If Paul is seriously ill I shall be ill with anxiety, and if he dies I hope I shall die too ;" and she lay back in her place and watched the sun set, and grew melancholy, and thought of her father, and cried silently ; while the other two, having adjusted their tiff, were enjoying each other's society.

Sir Peter had been thinking a good deal about his dilemma with Mrs. Halkett, and he came to the conclusion that perhaps the gentlest and at the same time the most effectual way of blighting the false hopes Paul had excited, would be to ask her

to dinner to meet Chloe and Bertha. He would take care to show marked attention to Bertha, and thus pave the way for announcing his engagement, if, as he hoped, Bertha should accept him later on.

The romance of his life was over ; he did not consider himself in love with Bertha ; he thought she would make him an excellent and loving wife and his children a kind step-mother, and this was perhaps as much as he could expect a second turn of the marriage wheel of fortune to bring him.

His first marriage was founded on love and inclination, this was based on friendship and necessity on his side ; but he shrewdly suspected it would be a first and faithful love on Bertha's part. Hers was no passionate nature like Chloe's. She was gentle, affectionate, even-tempered ; there was a repose about Bertha that was very grateful to the busy, careworn physician, whereas Chloe's varying moods and quick transitions from grave to gay worried rather than charmed him.

Before he dropped the girls at their lodgings he had fixed a day with them for his little dinner. It was to be the following Thursday, and he sent out invitations that evening to Mrs. Halkett, General and Mrs. Malcolmson and their son, a young cavalry officer, and a medical friend whose wife was an invalid and unable to go out.

He had no refusals. Mrs. Halkett was profuse in the warmth of her acceptance, and spent the intervening days in preparing a gown in which to take the great doctor's heart by storm. It was an arrangement in green and gold, and did not err on the side of modesty ; indeed, it was so fearfully and wonderfully made that Sir Peter was thankful the Malcolmsons were on fairly intimate terms with Mrs. Halkett, otherwise they might have wondered who she was. Bertha Dane was horrified, and truth to tell, rather jealous, for before dinner Mrs. Halkett made a dead set at Sir Peter, who she flattered herself had invited her to act as hostess, and her surprise when she found there was to be no hostess, but that Dr. Davidson was asked to take the head of the table, was only surpassed when Sir Peter led Bertha Dane in to dinner and placed her at his right hand. Mrs. Halkett fell to General Malcolmson, while Chloe and young Malcolmson were content to amuse each other and leave the rest of the company to their own devices.

The dinner did not go off without a hitch, for there was a new footman, upon whom Drummond had impressed that there were two kinds of sherry on the sideboard.

"This is ordinary sherry and is for dinner ; this, in the best decanters, is better, and is for dessert. Now don't make any mistakes," said Drummond, who was not in the best of tempers, on account of Mrs. Halkett's presence.

Suddenly during a pause in the conversation at the beginning of dinner, the new footman was heard to say in a sepulchral voice :

"Ordinary sherry, or better, sir ? "

Sir Peter looked at Drummond, who under cover of the roar of laughter, which was the only resource at such a crisis, rushed to the footman, seized the dinner sherry, and went round with it.

And that footman had a bad quarter-of-an-hour in the servants' hall that evening.

"What a pity Sir Peter has not a wife," said Mrs. Halkett in an undertone to General Malcolmson.

"I don't think he will be without that very doubtful luxury, saving your presence, long," said the general.

Mrs. Halkett's spirits rose ; the general was one of Sir Peter's most intimate friends ; was it possible he had confided to his friend his intentions with regard to herself ? But what in the world did he mean by taking that great plain girl in to dinner, and putting her in the seat of honour ?

"Have you any idea who it is ? " she asked.

"The lady on my left," said the general, who was sitting between Bertha and Mrs. Halkett.

"On your left ? " she asked in amazement.

"Yes, Miss Bertha Dane ; Dursley explained to my wife his reason for taking her in to dinner instead of Mrs. Malcolmson."

This was said as the first *entrée* was handed round ; Mrs. Halkett looked at the *menu* in front of her, the next course was sweetbreads, followed by roast lamb ; sweetbreads were one of her weaknesses ; she decided to wait for them, and faint while the lamb was running its course. A fainting fit, she argued, would necessitate her removal to another room, and would bring Sir Peter to her side, and give her the opportunity of private conversation she desired.

She reckoned without her host though, for although she fainted

admirably, Drummond and Dr. Davidson got her out of the room, and the latter promptly cut her dress lace, administered cold water generously, and was back at the dinner-table before the lamb had disappeared.

"She is all right, Dursley ; she had better be left alone for a little while," he remarked as he took his seat.

In spite of these *contretemps*, Sir Peter did not at present recognize that his little dinner was not a success ; he had not observed the coldness of Bertha's manner to Mrs. Halkett, nor the way in which Chloe contrived to ignore her presence altogether ; nor did he notice that Mr. Malcolmson, who was a remarkably handsome man, was evidently falling in love with Chloe, who received all his attentions with the utmost *sang froid*.

That Mrs. Halkett was plotting how to frustrate his little plans with regard to Bertha never occurred to him to suspect, and could he have foreseen her course of action, he certainly would have retired with the ladies to the drawing-room and not given her even ten minutes' law. But he was flattering himself all was going well ; the fainting fit was unfortunate, but he attributed it to the fact of Mrs. Halkett's having grasped the situation, which was precisely what he desired her to do, so he enjoyed his dinner, and made Bertha happy by some speeches, whose meaning she could not fail to understand.

Meanwhile the clouds were gathering ; after dinner came dessert, and then—the deluge.

(*To be continued.*)

In the Shadow of the Pines.

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE WILDS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

FAR away across the wide expanse of prairie which lies between Lake Winnipeg and the Bow River ; beyond the level wheat lands of Manitoba, the rolling yellow grass of Assiniboia, and the white alkali wastes and grazing uplands of Alberta, a great mountain rampart stretches across the western horizon.

There, the Rocky Mountains, lifting a long white line of minaret and pinnacle, crested with eternal snow, against the azure sky, shut off the sweep of the prairies from the rugged and beautiful region which lies between them and the Pacific. To this country, as towards a promised land, the thoughts of unfortunate wheat growers or stockmen on the plains are ever turned ; and the settler who has lost his all through a frozen wheat crop, or has seen his last hope die out with his sickly cattle in a season of drought, puts a notice, "Cleaned out—gone to B. C." on the door of his shanty for the information of sorrowing creditors, and departs westward—where he is not always successful either.

Some few years ago, the writer, in company with Pierre Micquelon, a French Canadian, a descendant of the old *coureurs des bois*, who traversed the silent prairie country and the wild land beyond the Rockies a century before the "Scotchmen," as they were called, came out of Ontario, made a trip through the remoter districts of British Columbia.

We went on the C.P. Railroad, by the Kicking Horse Pass, through that chaos of mountains, the Canadian Rockies. In places scarped sides glittering like polished steel in the sunlight rise 10,000 feet in the air ; in others dark pine forests creep up the mountain slopes or fill the ravines, dwindling away to bush and furze ere they reach the height where folds of glittering glacier or sheets of snow cross the skyline. There are mountains like castles, like Gothic cathedrals, and many in the likeness of nothing on this earth ; and over all hangs a solemn grandeur

and a stillness, emphasized, not broken, by the hoarse calling of snow-fed streams among the boulders below.

For some weeks we steamed along the lonely valleys of the Columbia river in a stern-wheel steamer, and traversed the trails of the Okanagan region on horseback, and then one bright morning stood above the wonderful cañon of the Fraser River. No pen can adequately describe this scene of savage grandeur, still we cannot mention British Columbia without saying a word about it.

Imagine a clean-cut gash through the heart of the lofty Cascade Range, the depth of which the eye can scarcely grasp, down which the mingled waters of the Thompson and Fraser rivers, fed by the melting snow along a thousand miles of mountain range, pour to the Pacific. Vertically from the water rise walls of rock of varied colors, pearl grey, vermillion and golden brown, interspersed with bands of glittering quartz, until when seen from below the sky overhead appears like a thin streak of azure, and the great pines and redwoods which crown the edge of the cliff resemble a narrow lacework of green. Enough of the Fraser Cañon ; it must be seen to be appreciated, and then the memory can never be obliterated from the heart of the beholder.

A few days later we crossed the north bend of that river near the Big Bear Creek and prepared to enter the wilderness which lies between it and the Pacific. Waving our hands towards the little settlement, we adjusted our "packs," consisting of blankets, flour and camping utensils, on our backs, and struck out into the forest. That was our last sight of all that pertained to civilization for weeks to come. Pierre knew a little of the country through which we were going, a land in which the foot of white men had rarely been set, but we had with us a Siwash Indian called Pechacalum, as guide. That night, after making some six miles through the dense undergrowth and over the fallen logs which lie beneath the firs and hemlocks, we camped on an outlying mountain spur, and after making a fire prepared a simple meal of flapjacks, which are a composition of flour and water resembling a pancake, and salt pork ; then lighted our pipes, and leaning against one of the great trunks, probably ten feet in diameter, I listened to strange tales of love, war and sudden death told by the voyageur and the Indian in the quaint

Chinook tongue. The latter is a corrupted Indian language in common use along the Pacific coast. When I lay down on my couch of fern and aromatic cedar twigs I was glad to find our persevering friend the mosquito had not followed us. "He cometh not, she said"—and we didn't want him. There are places along the "B. C." rivers where one dare not pass the night, so numerous are these pests; it is no exaggeration to say it would be dangerous. By the way, the letters "B. C." are the provincial rendering of "British Columbia," and do not refer to the early ages; though the once well-known "H. B. C." of the Hudson's Bay Company used to be rendered, "Here before Christ."

Early in the morning we resumed our journey and descended into a deep valley where bracken grew higher than our heads and maiden-hair fern waist deep. Leaving Pierre to mark the spot where we placed the packs, Pechacalum and I with a '44-70 Winchester rifle apiece forced our way through the leafy screen to look for a deer. At length we reached an open glade and across it saw the slender form of a deer against the flowering clusters of an arrowhead bush.

Now the wood deer is a very shy creature, so simultaneously both rifles went up to the shoulder and lining the foresight on the hollow behind the shoulder I drew the trigger. A cloud of blue smoke hung heavily over the damp bushes, and we waited a few moments until it cleared away, then running forward found the victim lying amid the waxlike flowers which his struggles had shaken down, a thin stream of blood trickling across the delicate tracery of fern on which he lay. The *Cervus Virginianus*, or American Wood Deer, as found in B. C., is, I think, smaller than the same species shot in other parts; it is of a particularly slender shape, horns generally small with two or three snags, and varies in colour from pale slate to fawn. While I have killed many for food, there is always a kind of being a murderer feeling comes over one when you see the eyes of the beautiful creature slowly glazing.

A flock of humming birds, living jewels, gold and crimson and green, fluttered in and out of the arrowhead flowers unmindful of our presence, and beneath the great pines, which were old when Columbus first crossed the western sea, one felt that this silent world belonged to the creatures of the forest and that the presence

of mankind there, shedding blood, was a desecration. However, hunger knows no law, and shortly afterwards we turned back towards Pierre with the haunch. On the way we surprised a small black bear feeding on the fleshy leaves of the cabbage plant, and it was comical to see the round plump body, for this creature is very like a black hog in appearance, crashing through bush and fern at a tremendous pace. The black bear is a timorous beast, and unlike the deer, goes through anything in his way ; you can follow his path through the forest a long distance by the snapping and breaking of twigs, while the deer sails over every obstacle in long graceful bounds. A nine-foot split-fence will not stop them, as the writer knows to his sorrow. That night we feasted on fresh venison, but if any one fancies it is a luxury they should try it and see ; the meat is a bundle of fibres resembling boot laces. The next two days were spent traversing a "brulée," or burnt forest, through which a bush fire had lately gone. All the undergrowth had been swept away and the ground lay a foot deep in ashes, strewn every here and there with enormous logs and fallen branches, while on every side the huge trunks, stripped of their limbs and foliage, tottered on their bases, tall cylinders of charcoal. A dangerous place is a burnt forest, for when a fresh breeze sweeps through it the trees go crashing down one after another like a row of ninepins ; at times you can hear their fall miles away through the silence of the woods. Then a fortnight passed while we struggled through the fern or over the ridges of outlying spurs, sleeping in the open air, which in this summer land of scented breezes is a luxury and not a hardship, and living on venison and grouse. The B. C. grouse is a curious bird and merits a word of description ; the "Willow grouse" somewhat resembles the British bird, but rarely flies ; it prefers to scurry through the undergrowth, though when hard pressed it will fly to the branch of a tree, where it imagines itself perfectly safe. I remember one we started ; for a quarter of an hour we chased the invisible rustling creature through the bushes until at last we flushed it and the bird perched on a big cedar bough. Now a shot gun is unknown in these woods and a rifle ball would smash the body to bits, so it is only permissible to cut off the head—if you can, by a well-directed shot.

Kneeling down to make more sure, I lined the sights on the slender neck. "Crack" went the rifle, but the grouse only

moved a few inches along the branch. Next shot chipped a feather from its neck, when it coughed and moved again; then centering the foresight on its head I fired once more and the unfortunate bird whirled down a fluttering mass of feathers. "C'est un drôle," said Micquelon.

There is also the big "blue grouse," a bird something like the capercailzie; this one delights to perch itself on the top of a tall fir and makes the woods resound with a peculiar drumming, hammering noise, very like the sound of the big wood-axe, which can be heard at least a mile; I believe it is produced with the wings, but opinions differ.

At last we stood on one of the summits of the dividing range between the basin of the Fraser and the Pacific slope, the great Cascade Mountains. As far as eye could see stretched a line of peaks tipped here and there with snow, limitless pine forests, blue lakes and shining ribands of rivers, with no faint spiral of smoke to show the presence of man in all its borders.

After descending precipitous ravines and wading snow-fed creeks for two days, we reached the waters of a small river and camped to make a canoe and feed on salmon. The first thing to do was to choose a straight-stemmed cedar, and after the ringing of the axe for half-an-hour, the groaning and cracking of straining fibres told that the lordly tree was ready to fall. "Take one more chip out, Pierre," I said. "Allons," said the Canadian, and whirling up the big two-handed axe to the full stretch of his splendid arms, the heavy razor-edge wedge flashed in the sunlight and next moment the chip flew out. There was a sound of rending timber, and the great trunk went crashing down, sweeping off massy branches from the surrounding firs and striking the ground with a thud that echoed far across the forest.

A most useful tool and a deadly weapon is the long-hafted Canadian axe, as I, who have seen many a serviceable house built, lined with split boards, and roofed with shingles, by the use of this tool and only an auger and a froo (an instrument like a big drawknife) besides, know. Also one night when I heard the heavy blade used as a defence against timber wolves, shear through skull and spine, I could judge of its offensive qualities.

Chopping off a seventeen-foot length of the trunk we squared it up, and under the direction of Pechacalum, burned it hollow with fire and hewed the outside into the rough resemblance of a

boat ; then leaving him at work, chipping away with a tiny adze of two-inch blade, and no guidance but his eye, followed the river in search of salmon. The water was black with them, for the numbers that force their way through gloomy cañon, foaming rapid and up vertical fall, six hundred miles inland from the blue Pacific to the head waters of the Columbia, Fraser, Skeena and Stikine rivers, is incredible. On the Fraser alone are some thirty canneries, and in the whole province fifty or sixty. The fish are caught by the Indians with spear or net, for they will take neither bait nor fly, and are emptied into a large hopper outside the cannery. As they slide one after another out of a steel pipe, generally alive, and slip along a bench they are seized by rows of Chinamen, and after a few passes of a big knife, flung on one side ready for boiling. There are many kinds, but the largest and best is the "Royal Chinook" or "King" salmon, taken up to seventy-five pounds in weight—I have heard of them eighty—which has a very dark blood-red flesh. If you open a tin of salmon and find it unusually deep in colour you may be sure it is the best.

Picture to yourselves a broad stream suddenly appearing out of the forest, and after sweeping round a curve in a succession of flashing rapids lost to view again amid the trees, and you have a typical "B. C." river.

This was the time of the "Steelheads," a fish apparently identical with the British salmon, so cutting long fir poles we fashioned them into rude spears, and slipped over the point a bone head skilfully carved by the Indians ; fastening it to the shaft by a strip of plaited sinew. Then wading knee deep in the icy water, I waited until a shoal of black backs and glistening sides swept past, and drove the spear down, but I was out of practice and the thrust missed. A minute later a second shoal went by, sculling hard with their tails against the rush of water, for it is the tail and not the fins which the fish chiefly uses to propel itself. This time a delicious shiver ran along the clumsy pole, and the barb driven overhead in the quivering fish slipped off its socket, as was intended, leaving the prey attached to the pole by the sinew.

Carefully guiding it to the bank, I dragged out a beautiful silvery salmon of about twenty pounds, of which we caught a number that day. Some we ate, roasted on hot embers, and the

rest we dried in the pungent smoke of hemlock bark and carried along.

A few days later we ran a blazing torch along the outside of the canoe to take off any little roughness or loose shavings and launched her on the river, a beautifully modelled craft sixteen feet long by three feet beam, which an English gig would have hard work to beat under sail or oar, and for some time travelled westwards towards the coast, making good progress. Then for two days we paddled over the blue waters of a nameless lake, floating as it were between two worlds, a vision of azure sky, snowy peak and dark pine reflected in the clear depths beneath, and the real one above, for so still is the air in the summer land of the north that not a ripple broke the glassy surface till the gurgling wash of the canoe blotted out the inverted picture and widening out died away in a faint lapping on the waterworn rocks ashore. On the evening of the second day we followed an outgoing river until sunset, when we camped on its banks in a lonely gorge. Imagine a steep hillside rising almost perpendicularly from the water to a height of some two thousand feet, every yard of the slope clothed with the dark foliage of pines and firs; then above the trees a cone of snow shining cold and white against the sky; a narrow strip of level land covered with forest and traversed by a rapid river; then another wall of rock, but this time a sheer precipice, one thousand feet of greystone, and you have our camping ground; and many of the B. C. river valleys resemble it. After supper I lighted my pipe and listened to the weird tales Micquelon told of the Loups Garoux, or human wolves, about which the early voyageurs have handed down many strange legends, watching the aromatic wreaths of cedar smoke drift across the river as the light gradually died away. Overhead the great peak still loomed out white and cold against the fading splendours of orange and gold, but trains of mist were already rolling down the hill slopes and the shadow deepened over the pines below.

By-and-bye the last of the light went out, a low hung moon was visible over the eastern end of the gorge, and for an hour there was an intense silence, only broken by the murmur of the river and the night wind stirring the pines overhead. Why, I do not know, for we were all used to the life of the woods, but that night an eerie feeling crept over us, and I threw more branches

on the fire. Then the moon rose higher, a silvery light filtered down into the forest glades and the cry of the "loon," that strange bird which sends its weird call across the lonely Canadian waters all night long, rang out from the river.

"Mourning for its lost soul," said Micquelon, and Pechacalum nodded, for this is the Indian belief. Then we heard the cry of a panther, like that of a peevish child, on the hillside above, and afterwards silence for a space, broken by rustlings among the undergrowth that told of some unseen beast issuing from its lair to hunt by moonlight.

Pechacalum, who had been listening intently, now whispered in Chinook, "You will see a great sight, for the wolves drive the deer to-night." At this I was half pleased and half uneasy, for I had heard of this thing and greatly desired to see it. Yet having been in the Eastern woods, where when the waters lie bound beneath feet of ice, the big timber wolf is dreaded by the settlers, I could never overcome a fear of the same beast which abounds in British Columbia, and especially Vancouver Island; there, however, it is invariably afraid of mankind and quite harmless.

How Pechacalum knew what he said I could not understand, but the Siwash having dwelt for centuries among the creatures of the forest, instinctively know their ways.

"Will not the fire stop them?" I asked as we drew closer together.

"No," said Pierre, "when the wolves hunt nothing will stop them. They cannot run down a deer, though they stalk them through the fern, so they drive them into a dead ravine, a *cul de sac*, and pull them down. *Nous verrons.*"

The silence settled down deeper than ever until you could hear the smallest pine needle slipping from a bough, then from far away up the valley the long howl of a wolf floated out of the darkness, answered by another and another along the hill slope above. We listened intently, but I could only hear something like a drum beating behind my ear. "The pack gather," whispered the Siwash, and presently another weird howl rang out, nearer and louder; then a chorus of short snarling barks, nearer yet.

I felt more cold chills go down my back than the wind from off the snow accounted for. I wanted to get out of there—quickly, for the gorge was so narrow that the whole chase must pass by

our side, but the Indian gripped my arm. By-and-bye, a rapid "beat, beat" of hoofs and "swish, swish" of leaves sounded down the valley, and while I sat, hardly breathing, gazing into a moonlit avenue between the great trunks, half-a-dozen deer came into sight, sailing along at a headlong gallop, clearing every obstacle, thorny bush and tangled thicket, in graceful bounds. Almost immediately they vanished, flitting like ghosts amid the pines, and a few moments later a pack of huge black and grizzled wolves burst into the light, following hard on the trail of the deer with shining eyes and dripping fangs, one or two giving tongue in the short snappy bark, so different from the long howl with which they call each other to the hunt. I shuddered as the evil beasts came into sight, and threw up my rifle, but Pechacalum thrust the barrel down and a few moments later they vanished among the shadows, and only an occasional howl to call in the stragglers and a snapping of twigs sounding fainter and fainter out of the darkness, told that the chase still swept on down the valley. "They will drive them into a corner among the rocks, and unless the old leader is there to divide the spoil, will slay one another after the deer," said Pechacalum, as with a sigh of relief I rolled myself in a blanket and went to sleep.

One day passed like another while we descended the river, until at length we reached a Siwash "rancherie" on one of the many beautiful fiord-like windings of the Straits of Georgia, near Bute Inlet, where we were glad to rest awhile. During our wanderings through this region of lonely and almost unearthly beauty we had found no more than the faintest traces of gold in any of the river bars, nor had we come across a valley where a ranche could be cleared in less than two generations, so heavy is the timber; therefore, except from an artistic and adventurous point of view, the journey was without result. When we reached the Rancherie we were clothed in rags, even our stout deerskin jackets being torn almost to ribands, so difficult are these forests to traverse.

This dwelling of the Indians, like many another from Oregon to Alaska, stood in the bottom of a deep wooded valley, through which a river flowed. On the pebbly bank were drawn up a fleet of canoes, all beautifully modelled craft, with tall stems carved into the quaint resemblance of the head of a bird and cut from one cedar log. There were canoes of all sizes, from 35 feet sea-going craft down to the 14 by 2 feet river canoe; round which played a

swarm of naked children and mongrel curs. On either side rows of stakes supported strings of drying salmon and trays of berries dessicating in the sun ; while behind the whole rose a long one-storied house, built of roughly split cedar logs, in which the entire colony dwell, each family having their own particular portion of the floor. Unlike the dirty sullen Blackfeet, Crows and Bloods of the Canadian prairies, the Siwash, Haidés and Sitkas, coast Indians, are generally speaking a peaceable and industrious people, usually attired much the same as the white settlers. They are short and broad in stature, with complexions rather olive than red, long straight hair and dark eyes, and are evidently of an Eastern origin, and much more nearly resemble the Japanese than they do the prairie Indians.

By seal and fur hunting, and carrying goods along the coast in their sea canoes, they gain a fair living and are generally as well off as the forest ranchers, with whom they are at all times disposed to be friendly.

The writer was never more kindly treated than at that rancherie, and it was with regret that at last we sailed away in a big sea canoe, and after being nearly lost in the tide race off Valdez Island, coasted down the Straits of Georgia until we reached Nanaimo, or, as it is pronounced, Nymo, on the east coast of Vancouver, and our wanderings came to an end.

Speaking generally the province of British Columbia may be called a beautiful wilderness ; there are on the coast the thriving cities of Vancouver, Victoria (by the way, Vancouver is on the mainland and Victoria on Vancouver Island) and New Westminster. Gold mining is being developed in the Kootenay district, the coal of Nanaimo is extensively worked, and there is farming along the marshy banks of the lower Fraser. Canneries and saw mills are dotted here and there along the river banks ; yet with all this, so high and rugged are the mountains, so dense the forests and so difficult the task of making roads or railways, that probably a considerable portion of this beautiful province will long remain covered with the giant redwoods, firs and cedars, and inhabited only by the wolf, bear and eagle. The man who is not forced to depend on each year's crop for existence and is fond of the open air and sport, would probably find in British Columbia a congenial occupation in ranching or trying to clear a forest farm ; but the writer would not recommend it as a field

for general agricultural emigration, when a man has very small means and only his right arm to depend on, as it generally takes four years or more to clear enough land to keep three or four cattle, while if you grow grain you cannot get it to the market from a bush farm. For the trout fisher, rifle shot, or artist it is an "earthly paradise," and for such a man there is a subtle spell about this lonely north land, which once it enters his heart can never be driven out. After a lapse of some years the scent of burning peat or autumn leaves still brings before the writer's eyes a dim vision of range beyond range of snowy mountains, gleaming blue lakes and pathless forest, and he sees again the whirling wreaths of fragrant cedar smoke drifting through the pines, and feels that it would be worth much to hear once more the sighing of the night breeze across limitless forests, and the roar of the Pacific surf breaking along the lonely beaches.

WEATHERGAGE.

"Twice Bit."

By H. L'ESTRANGE MALONE.

YES, Fred had the fever badly, and no mistake. Never saw a fellow so completely bowled over in all my life. It was simply sickening to see the listless, moonstruck sort of way in which he would stroll about and sigh, as if he had all the cares of the state on his shoulders.

"Who's Fred, you say?"

Well, old man, give me a chance. I am not a phonograph, or even distantly connected with a typewriter, and, if I do commence in the middle of my story, I've no doubt I shall get back to the beginning eventually, and you must just follow me as well as you can.

After the untimely death of poor Algy Knowles, of which I told you a little while ago, I had to put sentiment aside and place before myself the serious question of finding another fellow to share my somewhat expensive rooms. I admit that for a few foolish moments I thought of taking a wife for better or worse. Visions of a nice little woman to cheer me after my day's work, and have a piquant dinner awaiting my return, instead of the tough steaks and chops I had to put up with from my landlady, came before me. These thoughts, however, were but transient and were soon dissipated—as the effects of a good sermon often are—when I began to consider the impracticability of it all. Side by side with the delights of matrimony I placed dressmakers' and tradesmen's bills, and the hundred and one little expenses connected with it, which the income of John Braithwaite could not possibly meet. One morning as I was turning over in my mind as to whom I should ask to share my digs and occupy the room facing the church, my difficulty was at once settled on perusing a letter from an uncle, whom I had only seen once, asking me if I would allow a young cousin, who was coming up to town as a clerk in a city office, to live with me, and also whether I would keep an eye on him. I wrote back to say that I should be pleased to let

him share my rooms, but, as for keeping him straight, I would not hold myself responsible, as I had seen so many country fellows who come to London go wrong, and they would continue to do so through all time though they had fifty pairs of eyes kept upon them. It is a great thing never to commit yourself. If people only knew that half the bothers in life are caused by good-natured promises, they would be much more chary in making them.

Well, one fine morning Fred Harvard arrived with all his goods and chattels. I don't know what he could have thought of me when he first appeared before me, as I was seized with uncontrollable laughter.

I said, "Excuse me, old chap," and then fairly split my sides, and I don't know how much longer I might have gone on had it not been for the ominous frown on Fred's brow.

In a very icy tone he said :

"I am glad, sir, that I am able to afford you so much amusement, but may I ask what there is about me in particular that gives you such unbounded merriment."

"Oh, pray don't apologize!" said I, nearly exploding again ; "but the idea of keeping an eye on you is so very ridiculous."

The frown cleared off Fred's brow and a broad grin expanded over his face, and he was soon joining in my merriment.

Now, my boy, I suppose you think it is about time that you were let into the joke also. Well, to commence with, Fred was about six feet three inches in his stockings and proportionally broad, and I should think that he could have picked me up and put me under his arm without suffering the slightest inconvenience ; and the idea of my keeping an eye on him seemed altogether too ridiculous. He was indeed a fine-looking fellow, with an honest, frank face. Not handsome, but every inch of him a man. What a pity, was my mental comment, that such a fine fellow should waste his life in a city office. How soon would those broad shoulders stoop ; that athletic frame become flabby and unhealthy amidst the sordid surroundings of a city life.

Fred Harvard was a very decent sort of fellow to live with : quite different from poor Knowles. Temper not easily ruffled, a first-rate boxer and proficient in all other manly sports.

I had only one fault to find with him and that was his horrid impulsiveness. Now it has been my experience that impulsive

people are always landing themselves and their friends into some mess or other, and Fred was no exception to the rule.

I remember one evening going out for a stroll with him. There was some woman in the street selling matches, and he said she was very beautiful. Well, so she may have been, but I thought she looked uncommonly like a woman with a past. Well, in an impulsive good-natured fit he gave her a sovereign.

I thought at the time that it was a mad thing to do, because, if fellows can afford to give away sovereigns in the street, they don't want to slave away all the week in city offices. However, it was no intention of mine to lecture him, and so I said nothing till, on the following Thursday, the day on which we usually settled with our landlady, he asked me, in a sheepish way, if I could lend him a sovereign for a week, then I blazed out and gave him a good sound talking. I told him that I was always ready to help a fellow in a difficulty, but that I was not a blessed philanthropic institution, and that fellows who could afford to throw away sovereigns ought not to want to borrow money.

I remember also another time, how we both nearly got locked up one night through this same impetuosity. One Sunday evening we were going over to the other side of London to visit some mutual friends. At the time I mentioned, we were certainly not going through the most aristocratic quarter in town, when a man, a disreputable-looking blackguard, by the way, and, I should think, connected in some way to the much heard of British workman, bumped up against Fred, and by way of adding insult to injury, abused him roundly. I won't repeat the language here, not because I am squeamish, but because I never could see the use of swearing as an aid to conversation. As a let off to one's feelings, I think on the whole that a good swear is now and again a very healthy and invigorating habit. It is like a safety valve for waste steam, and I am sure that if ladies were to use it a little occasionally, they wouldn't age nearly so quickly.

Well, to get back to my story, Fred, like a fool, retaliated, and the man immediately squared up, saying :

"Come on, will yer ; I'll take the shine out of yer."

I tried to hurry Fred away, but not a bit of it ; before you could say Jack Robinson, he had his coat off and said quietly :

"I am ready, my man."

By this time a small crowd was collecting, and when the man saw that Fred meant business, he didn't half like it, and would have sneaked off, but the people would not let him ; egging him on to give it to the toff. He made a desperate lunge at Fred, who parried the blow and caught him a heavy one full on the nose. This thoroughly roused the man's anger, and he flew at Fred like a wild beast, throwing him off his guard, and nearly felling him to the ground. He, however, quickly recovered, and with the coolness of long practice, began to punish the man fearfully, dealing blow after blow till the man sank down in a heap on the pavement.

"Hi ! there ! a copper's a-coming !" was the next cry, and we had to make off, I feeling pretty disgusted at being mixed up in such a low brawl.

These sort of adventures used to happen very often, and sometimes would make me repent that I had ever met him. But on the whole he was a jolly sort of a fellow to live with ; always in the best of spirits and with an appetite—well, it was simply appalling. When he first came up I used to wonder as to how he would spend his evenings. I had vowed that I would take no more young fellows out to dances, after the fool Knowles had made of himself, but I found that my fears in this direction were groundless, as Fred had a whole host of friends and relations in London, and was always going out to dances and at homes.

One evening, I was sitting up very late doing some writing, when I was surprised to hear somebody coming up the stairs and enter the room quietly, and there before me stood Fred. You may say that there was nothing so very extraordinary about this, but it really was most remarkable, as Fred, as a rule, bounded up the stairs three at a time, slamming the door—a nasty trick he had—thereby shaking the jerry-built house to its very foundations, and perhaps, if he were in the mood, he would execute a sort of a war dance all round the room, and cause me to use much bad language.

But when he came forward with this sickly, struck-all-of-a-heap expression on his face, I simply said :

"Who is she ?"

"What do you mean ? what do you know ?" said he.

"Oh, I know the symptoms," said I ; "had them myself when I

was your age. Better go to bed, and you will get over it in a few weeks."

"Never! never! never!" said Fred, admitting at once what he had before questioned. "I shall love her to my dying day. I——"

"If you think I am going to stop here to listen to your twaddle, you are jolly well mistaken. Of course she is all that's nice. They always are. I am going to bed now, and I will hear all about her at breakfast. Good-night, my love-sick boy."

Next morning at breakfast he was about to start, wound up like a clock-work machine. I promptly cut him short by putting a few questions to him thus:

"Your income?"

"£140," this sheepishly.

"You will be getting £300, when?"

"In about ten years time."

"And the lady you are going to ask to share this luxurious salary with, is?"

"Grace Fenton."

"Good Lord!" was my only ejaculation.

Fred's volume of words could now no longer be kept back, and though I tried to check him at the commencement, as one can dam a stream, I soon saw that it was folly to try to stem the force of such a torrent.

After I had listened to all he had to say on the beauties and virtues of Grace Fenton, which I will not weary you with, I said to Fred:

"Yes, my boy, I will take all you say for granted, but let me know exactly how the situation stands at present and let us take a practical view of the whole matter. First and foremost, have you proposed?"

"Yes," replied Fred.

"Accepted?"

"Yes," was again the rejoinder.

"Have you spoken to her father?"

At this question, Fred, who had been pacing round the room in his excitement, collapsed into a chair and feebly replied:

"No."

"Then when you come home this evening from business, you had better put on your hat and go and do so," said I; "it is the only honourable course open to you."

Poor Fred mopped his brow and said he would.

"And now to breakfast. Hang it if love affairs aren't getting the bane of one's existence."

It was a chilly evening and I was sitting toasting my toes in front of the fire with a book, wondering how long Fred would be, when I heard his latchkey in the door, which slammed to with a bang, and up the stairs he bounded in his old familiar manner. Into the room he rushed like a whirlwind, nearly upsetting the lamp, slapped me on the back, which, his fist being no light weight, discomfited me somewhat, and round the room he danced, making a horrible dust rise from the old musty carpet.

"My dear Fred," said I, "if there is one thing I hate more than another, it is a sudden rise or fall in the barometer. A storm certainly does clear the air, but it makes everybody jolly uncomfortable while it lasts; for goodness sake sit down like a reasonable fellow and tell me the meaning of all this excitement. Are the banns to be published next week, or are you going to be married by special licence to-morrow morning?"

"Neither, Jack," said he. "Mr. Fenton says that if we are both in the same frame of mind in two years time, we may think about marrying, as he says his daughter will not be portionless, and though he looks upon it as a wretched match for her, he does not wish to thwart her happiness. Isn't he a brick? Oh! I have something to work for now, a glorious future in prospect. I mean to succeed and make a name for myself. Good night, old chap! I am as happy as a king; I must write and tell the Pater."

I sighed as my mind travelled back to the days when I had my dream and when I loved with all my power. "Bah! time for bed when I get into this mood," I muttered.

* * * * *

"Why, Fred, what on earth is the meaning of this? Back from business at two o'clock, and I'm hanged if the mercury hasn't fallen to zero again. Why, man, what's the matter?"

"Matter enough, Jack, even to puzzle your practical brains. I tell you I'm ruined and all my hopes are dashed to the ground. I have joined the ranks of the unemployed."

"My dear fellow, what the dickens do you mean? Can't you explain yourself?"

"Well, simply this; the manager called three of the other clerks

and myself into his room this morning and said that the firm had sustained heavy losses: that they intended to reduce their staff and that it was only fair to dismiss the younger ones as it would be easier for them to find employment. I walked out of that office with a cheque for £11 : 13 : 4 in my pocket, and that is all I possess in the world. I can't apply to my father as he cannot possibly help me. Jack ! Oh Jack ! my God, I must break off my engagement ! What am I to do ? What am I to do ?"

"Do ? Why, put on your hat and come for a brisk five mile walk with me ; don't talk and you will feel better then. Don't be a fool and give in because you have met fate and she has given you a smart blow and knocked you down. Get up, man, and fight against her. Show that you are made of good stuff. Of course the engagement must be broken off, and at once, but that is no reason that it shouldn't be on again, one day. Buck up, my boy, pull yourself together. What ! twenty-three and asking in a despairing tone of voice, like a stupid school girl, what you are to do.

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"Now, then, you say you have been to office after office and shown all your references, backed up by mine, and they all with one accord began to make excuse and say they are like the 'buses on a wet day, 'full up.' You ask me for my advice ? Well, I will give it to you, and gratis too. I look upon this misfortune of yours as a blessing in disguise. Fancy a strapping great fellow like you using that manly fist to drive away at a pen. No, my boy, that arm was meant to wield a sword ; to strike at the enemies of Her Majesty the Queen. Come along with me ; you shall take the shilling, and mark you, if you have that within you which I think you have, you will rise to great things and become a general yet ! But before deciding on this, tell me, have you seen that old curmudgeon of an uncle of yours ? He is rolling in wealth and ought to help you."

"Yes, I saw him, and he said that he would never help me with a penny till I had made a name for myself in some way or other. He added comfort by saying that he had risen from nothing himself, and told me I could do the same ; and that once I had distinguished myself, he wouldn't be backward with the coin."

"Then all I have got to say, Fred, is that you are in luck's

way. You have a nice girl, who I am sure will wait for you. You have health, an athletic frame, and the promise of golden boys if you are successful in life. What more do you want? Do as I say; enlist, and with all the little wars we are continually having, you will have plenty of opportunity of distinguishing yourself sooner or later."

"What a good sort you are, Jack; you are always helping me out of difficulties, and hanged if I won't take your advice."

* * * * *

"Well, good-bye, old chap, and may God speed you," said I some months after, gripping Fred's hand, as we stood on the deck of the vessel which was to convey him and a detachment of marines to the East African coast, on a punitive expedition against a rebel chief who was causing us considerable trouble.

"Good-bye, Jack. Good-bye, old fellow. And, Jack, I may never come back alive; and if the worst happens ask her to try and forget all about me. Good-bye, old chap, good-bye."

* * * * *

Months rolled by without anything happening worth relating here. Like an animal, I lived, worked, ate and slept day after day. After all, why complain of the shortness of life when it is so full of dull days and prosaic things. I often used to scan the papers eagerly to see if there was any news of the expedition Fred was engaged in, nor was I disappointed, for one morning the following paragraph caught my eye:

OUR GALLANT SOLDIERS FIGHTING IN EAST AFRICA.

"After unheard of sufferings and difficulties, Commander Robertson, with a gallant force of marines and bluejackets, surprised Kaba in his stronghold on the 12th ultimo.

"They found that they had greatly underrated the number and strength of the enemy. A desperate fight ensued, our men, however, having to retire, being overwhelmed by numbers. It appears that Kaba and his impi took it too much for granted that they had defeated us completely, and consequently they celebrated a great feast the same evening, and when their merriment was at its height, Commander Robertson put in an unwelcome appearance with his men, backed up by Gatlings and cutlasses. The enemy were completely taken by surprise, and gave in almost immediately.

There were many acts of gallantry in connection with this

expedition, most noticeably so that of Corporal Harvard, who literally hewed his way through the enemy to the rescue of Commander Robertson, who was hemmed in on all sides by the natives, and would undoubtedly have been killed had it not been for the timely aid of Corporal Harvard, to whom, we understand, will be awarded the Victoria Cross."

"Bravo, Fred!" was my exclamation; "I knew he would distinguish himself when the occasion arrived. Why wasn't I a soldier, or a sailor, or something or other, where I could see and enjoy a bit more life than is to be obtained in a city office? Hanged if I don't ——"

"What would you like for dinner to-night, Mr. Braithwaite?" said the landlady's voice at the door.

Dinner! ah! good word that. Of course, all I have been thinking about is the glory of these professions. I have not taken into consideration the awful sufferings and privations attendant on all glory. Poor Fred! I expect he hasn't had a good square meal for some weeks. Well, I guarantee he shall have a good one with me when he returns.

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"Why, Fred, my boy, can it be you again?" said I, as I heard the old familiar steps on the stairs and the same impetuous rush into the room, and there before me, bronzed, and, if it were possible, taller than ever, stood the splendid figure of Fred Harvard.

"Yes, Jack, old fellow, here I am again. Arrived yesterday morning. Should have been to see you before this had I not had a more pressing engagement."

"Fred, just sit down and yarn right away, and you will find me a very good listener."

"Well, Jack, I don't know that there is much to tell, but such as there is you are welcome to, so here goes:

"After you left me, when the ship was just starting for Africa, I felt that the last link which bound me to the old country and all I held most dear had snapped.

"Music always had a queer effect on me, sort of lump in the throat feeling, and when the band began to strike up and the ship got further away from the land, I got into a quiet corner of the vessel and sobbed like a child.

"You mustn't think from this that I was like a sentimental,

lovesick schoolgirl all the time. No, I had my duties to attend to. I did them and did them well, too, trying to forget my troubles.

"It is wonderful, Jack, how easy it becomes to wear a weight round your neck when you have a prospect of having it lightened at an early date.

"For the first few days after we had left England, as I told you before, I was miserable, and it seemed as if my lovely Grace was a possession that I was leaving every day farther and farther behind me, when all of a sudden there came a change. Instead of viewing her as lost, she seemed to change her position, and in fancy I could see her like a shining light in the far distance on the African coast, beckoning me on to glory and freedom. Day by day that light grew larger and larger and I found myself terribly impatient to be on African soil and in the thick of the battle.

"My comrades would laugh at me and say that I should soon change my tune when bullets and assegais were whistling round me, and if by any unlucky chance we should fall a prey into the hands of the enemy, that we might expect no mercy from the savages.

"Well, to cut a long story short, we arrived at our destination, and all preparations were made for a march of a hundred miles or so to the stronghold of that brute Kaba, who has given us so much trouble.

"All went well for the first few days, except that our water supply got rather short, and as the heat was intense we suffered somewhat; but our progress was terribly slow, owing to the dense undergrowth, and indeed in many places we had literally to hack our way through. By Jingo! how sore my legs got. I never knew what a vocabulary I owned till it was so thoroughly tested in that memorable march.

"After the fourth day the enemy got news of our approach, and we were continually annoyed by being potted at by invisible beings, without a chance of retaliating, owing to our ignorance of the country and being unable to move quickly on account of the undergrowth. So persistent did this guerilla warfare become that our men were getting utterly demoralized, and had it not been for the presence of mind of our commander, the whole expedition would have met with disaster and defeat. First one

man dropped, mortally wounded, then another; some began to show symptoms of malaria and every one was thoroughly disheartened. Then Commander Robertson came to the front and proved himself at once to be the admirable leader that now all the world knows.

"He gave the command for a halt, ordered us to make a clearing in the forest, large fires to be lit, with Gatlings to right and left of us, to be prepared for any emergency, sanctioned a double allowance of grog, and told us to make merry for the rest of the evening. Those orders saved us all. Under the influence of decent spirits, good-fellowship and some rollicking fine songs, new life was put into us all. Malaria and all our other evils quickly flew away. How well I remember that evening in the depths of the African forest, with the weird howlings and cries of wild beasts joined with the chorus of up-to-date ditties. But by-and-bye we came to more serious songs, and, like our gallant soldiers in the Crimea, 'Annie Laurie' moved many of us to tears, but manly ones.

"Why is it, Jack, that music has such a stimulating effect on one? We who had been so weary and dejected before, now were all aglow with enthusiasm and alive with bellicose sentiments. I am quite certain that we cleaned up our weapons that evening with greater vigour than we had done before, for tomorrow we were to fight in grim earnest.

"We were but a few hours' march from Kaba's stronghold, and some of us made merry that evening for the last time on earth, for many a body lay prostrate the following day, with the life-blood staining the ground—the pioneers of civilization, whose lives are the forfeit.

"When 'Annie Laurie' was being sung I don't mind telling you I fairly blubbed. Those lines especially touched me, 'For she's a' the world to me,' &c., and I made a solemn vow then and there that I would either distinguish myself on the following day and prove myself to be worthy of Grace, or else extinguish myself by stopping a bullet for some better man and fill an unknown grave.

* * * *

"'Now, my men,' said Commander Robertson, 'to-day we fight. You will see your enemy, and we shall attack instead of being attacked. We are but a short distance from Kaba's

stronghold, and if my judgment is correct he and his men will keep within their stockades, which we shall have to storm. I won't disguise from you the fact that we have a hard task to perform. Our enemy is courageous, strong and sly, but remember England's eye is upon us, and therefore quit you like men, and above all obey my orders implicitly and we shall come out victorious if God so will.

"'Quick march!'

"That was a happy day for me, Jack; I knew that I was, as the song puts it, 'Marching on to glory or a soldier's grave.' Every man of us had a set, resolute look about him that boded no good for the enemy. After a couple of hours' march we came within sight of the stockades. Everything was as quiet as the dead, and it seemed as if the enemy had fled and that we were to be disappointed of our quarry.

"A halt was called and scouts were sent forward to reconnoitre, but the grim reality of warfare and the immediate vicinity of the enemy was soon brought home to us by a rifle report ringing out sharp and clear through the silence.

"Our scouts returned to us, narrowly escaping with their lives and one wounded in the arm, with the information that the enemy were, as far as they could tell, strong and well armed, and that the loopholes of the stockades showed the ominous muzzles of rifles, but as we knew they were indifferent shots, this did not worry us over much.

"The plan of action was that we were to divide ourselves into three parts and attack the front and rear at the same time, while the third party was to hold itself in readiness, and at the word of command, directly an opening was made in the stockade, to force their way through and fight hand-to-hand, while the others protected them as far as they were able with the Gatlings.

"The third party was under the command of Robertson, and I am glad to say I was a member of it.

"Under a deadly fire one end of the stockade was forced, and then came the signal for us to advance. With a Hip! hip! hurrah! we rushed into the opening, and for a moment were appalled by the numbers which we saw we had to encounter, but only for a moment. The next thing I remember was that Fred Harvard had disappeared, that a wild beast had taken possession of his body.

"Has it ever struck you, Jack, how nearly we resemble the wild beasts and how closely we are allied to the savages, against whom we are continually waging war in the interests of civilization? We are for all the world like tame tigers, who behave themselves so long as the sight of blood is kept from them, but once let them taste it and what becomes of their tameness? So it is with us. Scrape the veneer off, shed blood, and the latent savage in us is displayed in all his nakedness. I am sure that if I had lived in the days long ago, or had been brought up with the savages against whom we were fighting, I should have enjoyed human flesh; and you know that I always did like my meat underdone, and what a time it took us to drill into Mrs. Jones' head that we liked our steaks served up with blood-red gravy, much to her disgust. Do you also remember how I used to badger you to accompany me to those blood and thunder Adelphi dramas, where they nearly always throw in a battle scene for your money, and what difficulty I had in keeping my seat when the fighting was on, all in a tremor of excitement? Well, it was just so now. The sight of blood being shed around me like so much water, sent mine coursing through my veins like quicksilver.

"Comrades failing to right and left of me, pistol shots ringing out sharp and clear, cut, thrust and parry, I fought like a madman, and the thoughts of Grace lent me additional strength.

"Right through the middle of a huge black went my bayonet, twisting it inside his stomach and out again, just in time to parry a blow from another black devil.

"We were getting decidedly the worst of it, being overwhelmed by numbers, and the Gatlings were of no use, as our men were so mixed up with the blacks that it would have been a fatal error to have used them. Robertson passed the word to make for the opening and beat a retreat, but it was easier said than done. Then came my opportunity, which the papers have made so much unnecessary fuss about. The space round me for a moment was comparatively clear, when I saw Robertson a short distance off surrounded by a dozen natives. I just came up to him in time to ward off a fearful blow aimed at his head, and with the butt end of my gun smashed the fellow's face in, turning sharply round as a brawny great fellow was about to run me through with an assegai. Quick as lightning I lifted up my arm, the weapon God

has provided me with ; I gave him one straight from the shoulder. You know, Jack, that I can hit hard when I like, and that man fell to the ground stunned, and my hand still bears traces of his teeth. Just look. By dint of almost superhuman efforts the commander and I fought our way through the circle of men and made for the opening.

" 'Run,' said he. 'It is our only chance. We will give the brutes a lesson later on.'

"I remember no more except that while running I received a terrific blow on the head. I fell, and all was a blank.

"When I recovered consciousness, which, to use an Irishism, I never expected, it was night. I felt a terrible pain at the back of my head, but knew it was only on the surface, and nothing serious. I was laying prostrate on the ground, and there were several of my comrades by my side dead. A huge fire, not many yards off me, close enough to be felt, lit up what was truly a ghastly scene. Roasting over it on a spit was a human body, one of my comrades, and the smell of his burning flesh was horrible. Around this fire the blacks were dancing all kinds of fantastic dances, and the noise they kicked up was worse than Bedlam let loose. They were evidently celebrating a great feast on account of their triumphing over their enemy the white man, thinking they had crushed him once for all.

"Ah, thought I, wait a bit, my beauties, and you will find that for every Englishman's life you have taken you will forfeit ten of your dirty breed.

"All this time I had kept perfectly still and silent, knowing that any movement on my part would mean instantaneous death, when, to my horror, I saw the body that was roasting taken off the spit and a dead body *next to me* substituted.

"Now I have always enjoyed jokes about travellers being cooked and eaten : fricasseed Methodist parson, cold missionary on the sideboard, and other stories of the kind that we occasionally indulge in at home, but it had never occurred to me for one moment that I should find a resting-place within the stomach of a black, and, moreover, I was thoroughly opposed to being roasted.

"Unfortunately for myself, by the way the bodies were arranged my turn would come next. As I thought of it the perspiration stood on my forehead in great beads, and when I

considered my utter helplessness, I could have blubbed had I not been afraid of attracting attention.

"I had little hopes of Commander Robertson coming back with a rescue party, as, seeing me fall with such a terrific blow on the head, he must have thought that I had been killed outright.

"I thought of all my future hopes of happiness soon to be frustrated for ever. Twice hit—hit in England—hit in Africa—surely I was born beneath an unlucky star. However, the end would soon come. Oh, if I could only have had five minutes' conversation with Grace how happily could I have died.

"All the events of my past life came before me: My happy boyhood's days, when I had not a care in the world; the jolly time you and I spent together, Jack; and a hundred and one little incidents which only served to show me what a good thing is life, and oh, how I wished I could live.

"I am afraid I have never come up to a clergyman's standard of excellence, and you know, Jack, what a stern old man my father is, adhering strictly to the Calvinistic school. Poor old dad; he knew no middle course. It was either heaven with hymn books, psalms and endless alleluias, or else hell fire in its most literal sense.

"I remember once when I was a boy telling a lie over something or other, and to punish me he tied matches to my fingers, lit them and let them burn down to the tips. 'Now,' said he, 'you will know what to expect hereafter if you tell lies, for all liars have their part in the lake which burns with brimstone and fire.'

"These harsh measures only served to harden me, Jack, and to look upon God as an implacable, praise-loving, unmerciful Being, and therefore I never troubled about religious matters. But then I was so utterly helpless; dead bodies all round me, with an immediate prospect of being roasted myself.

"I remembered how those little burns with the matches hurt me, ugh! but my whole body to be subjected to the same treatment, and then, according to my father's creed, after I had been thoroughly well cooked by the blacks, the devil would be waiting for me at the entrance of hell, with a pair of tongs to place me in the warmest corner.

"When everything fails man, he must turn to God. I had none other to call upon. I tried to frame a prayer, but none would

come, and all I could think of was the little grace my sister would say before meals : ' For what I am about to receive, may the Lord make me truly thankful,' but I thought it was scarcely applicable to the occasion.

" ' Hang formality and fixed prayer,' said I to myself, after racking my brains in vain for one, ' why can't I address God as a son in trouble would address his father?' so I simply said, ' Father above, it seems I am about to die ; I would much rather live. Nothing short of a miracle can save me, so please perform it if the age of miracles be not yet past.'

" It was a simple, heartfelt prayer, and as if in direct answer to it, I caught sight of something flashing in the firelight close by my side. Cautiously putting out my hand, I found it was a clasp knife, evidently dropped in the heat of the fight by one of our men. Here was at any rate my release ; I could plunge it into my heart ; and thus save myself the awful alternative of being roasted alive. But stay, why not sell my life dearly? Yes, there were two blacks coming to seize me, and as they stooped over me to strip me, I sprang to my feet, and with a desperate thrust plunged the knife into the nearest man's breast, and out again in time to strike the other with it full in the face. The sight of their blood was balm to me, I laughed aloud.

" By this time the blacks around had sprung to their feet in alarm, and came rushing towards me, evidently with the intention of placing me on the fire.

" I knew the end was come.

" With a muttered prayer I lifted up my arm, and was about to plunge the knife into my heart, when crack ! crack ! crack ! came the sounds of rifle reports all round the stockade, and then the quickly rattling discharge of the Gatlings told me that Robertson was back with his men, that God had performed his miracle, that I was saved.

" I fell flat on the ground to prevent the shots from touching me, and the natives were running in all directions in confusion with wild cries of fear.

" Suddenly in the midst of the stockade came the manly forms of my comrades, and never were men more welcome. In another minute I was in the thick of the fight again, with only the clasp knife for a weapon, but never did knife perform better work than on that night.

I sprang upon any blacks who chanced to be in my way, forcing that knife into their throats, cutting and slashing, and with arm uplifted would bring it down on their ugly faces.

"The blacks by this time were in the wildest disorder, and soon laid down their arms, and never did mortal offer up sincerer thanks to God than did your humble servant.

"I had now no less than three wounds—a slash over the forehead, a nasty cut on the left arm, and the wound on the back of the head.

"Soon Commander Robertson came up, and shook me by the hand and said:

"'Harvard, you have proved yourself a true soldier, and I thank you for your services; but come to my tent, I will talk to you there.'

"I endeavoured to thank him, but I was weak from loss of blood, and everything was going round. I clutched him by the arm, and fell senseless to the ground.

* * * * *

"Jack, you must here imagine half a dozen stars, because, as they put it in the plays, an interval of half a dozen weeks had elapsed before I remembered anything more, as for that period I was in a state of delirium.

"When I came to myself I was, oh, so desperately weak, and I felt I should never rise from that bed in the hospital again.

"The doctor was standing by my bedside with a grave look on his face.

"'Doctor,' said I, 'I am going to die, am I not? Tell me the truth. What is the use of keeping it from me?'

"'You are in a very bad state,' said he, 'and it is no use concealing from you the fact that it would be most remarkable if you recovered.'

"'Have Commander Robertson and his men sailed for England?' I asked.

"'Commander Robertson has been with you every day,' said the doctor, 'and I think that that is his step I hear outside now.'

"In a minute the commander's manly figure was before me. He strode forward, grasped my hand silently, but there was a world of sympathy in that grip. •

"'Sir,' I said, the doctor having retired, 'the doctor tells me

I am about to die. I wish to ask you to convey a message across the seas for me, if you will. My God! it is hard, hard. As long as I have breath it will be to breathe blessings on her head. Sir, I am weak; I cannot talk much. Forgive me if I am abrupt. I will try and not weary you too much.'

"'Harvard, say no more. You shall give your message to a lady who is shortly going back to England. She will convey it better than I, a blunt old soldier, can. Say, Harvard, do you think you can bear a shock?'

"I smiled as I replied, 'I thought I was prepared for any shock,' having been through such a good school.

"'Very well, I will call the lady in, and you can give her your message.'

"What was there in the air that told me that something was about to happen? What was it that made my feeble pulse beat quicker? Whose step was that? Surely I knew it. My God! Grace Fenton!

"'Darling Fred! don't, don't talk,' implored she, as she nestled her lovely face down on mine and gave me a soft kiss. 'Get well—get well for my sake.'

"'Grace! tell me how came you here, and I will then be silent.'

"'Fred, dearest, how could I remain in England when you were in such deadly peril out here? I could not rest. Every day I thought I might read of your death in the paper, so I started for Africa, and here I am.'

"'Ah, Grace, too late. I may not live the night out.'

"'No, no, Fred, don't talk like that. You are indeed very ill, but you mustn't die yet.'

"As she said these words her eyes filled up and overflowed.

"'But I am yours in this world and the next,' said she, 'and to prove to you I mean it I will be married to you now, on your death bed. A clergyman is waiting in the next room. I will summon him.'

"'Ah, Grace, I ought not to accept so great a sacrifice.'

"'Fred, dearest, it is my wish.'

"Again the soft lips touched mine.

"Never was a wedding performed amidst such solemn surroundings, for at the foot of the bed stood death; but love is stronger than death and triumphed over it. Whether it was

Grace's presence or whether it was the fact of her actually belonging to me for the time being, I know not, but from that moment I got stronger. I determined that I would not die; and Grace did me more good than all the doctor's medicines. Day by day I got stronger till I was able to leave the hospital.

"Husband and wife, with all our lives before us, we started for England. I have, as you know, the Victoria Cross. My uncle has come forward with a handsome sum. I shall leave the marines and, with my uncle's help, serve my term at Sandhurst, where I hope to get my commission, and then, as the story books put it, live happy ever after.

"Twice hit, my boy, but the third time my lovely Grace came to the rescue. Come round and see her, old chap."

"Well, Fred, my boy," said I, "you must be dry after that story. Fill up your glass and then I'll come along with you. To-morrow I must look out for another fellow to share these digs since you have gone and got spliced."

Jack's Legacy.

INTRODUCTION.

THE following story is gleaned from some papers and sketches in my possession. The facts will be known to many, who, like myself, have been much in Syria, although the names are changed. The artist who relates the incidents will also be recognized under his assumed name by those who have known his career.

“BY Jove! the very thing,” I exclaimed as I read a letter which had just arrived from my friend Jack Haldon. I was finishing a series of sketches for a pictorial journal, but all vigour seemed to have gone out of me. A long hot summer and hard work had left their mark, and “change” was all the doctor whom I consulted could suggest. Change, yes! but how? With pictures unsold, and a little heap of weekly accounts overdue; of course they were not large sums, but they had to be paid at once, at least by a poor artist such as I was. At first, after leaving Rome, where I had studied for my career, I had met with fair success; each year some of my pictures having been well hung at Burlington House, and I had a few good patrons; then came a spell of ill-luck: my patrons either died or their own affairs went to the bad; my large picture over which I laboured many months cost me a mint of money, for the small studio in which I commenced my work in London was not large enough for its dimensions, and a more extensive and more expensive place was necessary. Then the model who sat for my principal figure went off in the sulks, just when I had sketched her in, causing me much delay and vexation. The worst of it was that my great picture, upon which I had built so much, was not accepted at the R.A. After the first disappointment was over, I looked into my affairs and found the balance at my banker’s almost nil; true I had received good prices for my pictures, but what artist ever looks forward to unsuccessful days? And then the temptation to buy this and that of artistic pottery, embroideries, old oak, silks, velvets, all sorts of properties to be brought into use by-

and-bye ; the money thus spent seemed nothing at the time, but now the very necessities of life were almost wanting. So I pulled myself together, and applied for work as sketcher to a pictorial paper. I had to read through the stories given me to illustrate, thus taking up the time I wanted to work at my beloved painting. Subjects were floating in my brain that I longed to produce on the canvas. I had to leave the heroic for sketches of girls in various attitudes ; some modest and bashful, listening to lovelorn young men, others in the ungraceful movements to which tennis gives rise ; "the trysting place ;" the house where *she* lived ; the boat and river upon which *he* came ; and so on ; but it helped to pay my way. At last the disappointment and worry told upon me, and this word of the doctor's rang in my ears. "Change," yes ! if I could only get away. How was it to be managed ? Jack Haldon's letter seemed to be the key to the enigma. I hastily put the last touches to the final illustration, giving the happy bride about three yards longer train to her gown than I should have done, I was so cock-a-hoop at the idea of being off, and Jack's letter keenly interested me. He wrote thus :

"DEAR OLD CHUM,

"Can you cut your work and run down to us for a month ? I am in a dilemma and want somebody's assistance. I have had a legacy of as queer a lot of things as ever man set eyes on, and such conditions ! They have all to be arranged here within a given time. My wife says only an artist can tackle them. Our old picture gallery must be re-arranged, and some of the ancestors sent to the attics. If you are free, do come and help me. It will be so jolly to have you with us ; if not, can you send somebody else ? a decent fellow to have in one's house, as some girls are with us. If you can come, don't delay ; say the day after to-morrow ; the brougham shall meet the train arriving at Haldon at five. Wire back.

"Yours,

"JACK HALDON,

"Haldon Hall."

"Somebody else, indeed," I muttered ; "no, Jack, I am your man." A telegram was soon flying north to the effect, "I will be with you at five." Another came back to me, "Rejoiced ! bring your painting things." Early the following morning I

took a run round to my expectant providers of meat and bread and told them frankly I could not pay them at present, but would soon do so. The man who supplied my daily steak, and who was my principal creditor, hummed and hawed and at last said, wiping his face with his not too spotless apron :

"Look here, sir, I don't want to bother you, but if I wait, will you take my wife's portrait?" pointing to her with his thumb as she sat at the desk. "You can take the price out in meat; now will that do?"

I barely glanced at the lady's face, and mentally groaned, but agreed to the terms; and away I went, my mind at ease. In due course I drove up to Haldon Hall, and was more than delighted with its appearance; the autumn sun was setting, lighting up the rows of old-fashioned windows in a manner which gave the idea that there was a brilliant illumination going on inside in my honour. Rabbits scuttled across the long elm avenue as we drove up, and some deer were clustered together under a large oak; we crossed the moat where had been formerly a draw-bridge, but was now a bridge built of stone; some old steps led from the terrace to a broad grass walk, with which I promised myself I would soon make closer acquaintance. Surely it would be a snug place for a stroll and a pipe.

On my arrival I received a warm welcome from my friend and his wife, and then some girls who were clustered round the tea-table in the bay window of the large square hall came forward and I was presented to them. But I only noticed one, who was rather taller than the others, a ray of the setting sun falling upon her hair as she poured out a cup of tea for me. Is it the stained glass or the natural colour, was my first thought? And then "what a glorious model," and I turned round to see that my "painting things," as Jack called them, were not turned too utterly upside down. Soon after I was busy unpacking them, in a paradise of a room to which Jack escorted me, saying as we entered, "You will find this a good light if you want to be at your old game, getting up with the lark to paint; but take my advice and have a good rest here; you look washed-out, old fellow."

"Well, I have been a good deal bothered this year and that takes it out of one, you know; but I say, Jack, what a glorious place you have got," leaning out of the window as I spoke.

"This is a better place to dream in than your old diggings in Rome, eh?"

"Yes," he answered doubtfully, "but you know there is a deal of work to be done here on the farm and manor, and one is expected to join in everything for the benefit of the people. I find that I am far more of a slave than before I came into the place, and lately this legacy has been the deuce. I have often wished myself back in my one room in the Piazza d' Spagna. But I will leave you now," he continued, walking towards the door. "We dine at seven."

Before he closed it I went across quickly and asked in a low voice, "I say, who is the tall girl with the beautiful hair?"

He turned in the doorway and answered, "Ah! be careful; I know your enthusiastic admiration for the dear angels with golden hair, but beware, my boy, she has not a brass farthing and never will have. Poor Netty Sinclair has to work for her living and her mother's as well."

I smiled. "Oh, trust me, Jack. But her hair is perfect—look well in a picture, you know. I have an eye to business."

He laughed, saying elegantly, "Shut up," and ran down the grand oak staircase. The evening light was just sufficient for me to see a bit of the gallery hung with full-length portraits of ladies and gentlemen looking rather like marionettes ready to begin a ghostly dance. Returning to my room I threw myself into a chair and felt delightfully at my ease, my thoughts wandering to a subject for a picture I had in view in which the principal figure had Venetian red hair. Thinking thus I almost fell asleep. The bell in the tower over the entrance soon rang out, giving me a start. I looked at my watch and found it a quarter to seven o'clock.

"The assembling bell, by jingo," I exclaimed, jumping up. To slip into my evening toggery was the work of a few minutes, and I quickly descended the now well-lighted staircase, overtaking the stately possessor of the red hair at the door of the drawing room. As I opened it for her she looked at me; the inexpressible sadness in her eyes gave me a shock from which I scarcely recovered sufficiently to answer the kind questions made by my hostess respecting my comfort.

The next morning after breakfast, Jack asked me to come to his den and have a smoke. We settled ourselves in two com-

fortable chairs, and by his side a table was placed laden with papers. Taking up a big parchment affair he said :

“ I am sure you are wondering, Hal, over the business I wrote to you about. It is all contained here.” He laid his hand on the document. “ I think, to make it clear, I had better read to you the most important—but first I will give you a few facts.” He lighted a fresh cigar and pushed a well-filled box across to me. “ You know that I came into this place on the death of my uncle, a rare, queer old fellow. For some reason or other he hated me cordially, and daily lamented I was the next in succession. So every penny not entailed he left to hospitals. Some time after his death I received a communication from a lawyer I had never heard of before, telling me of the death of an old aunt, my father's and uncle's sister, who seems to have been rather eccentric, and informing me that she had left me a good sum of money and her collection of eastern curiosities, but with certain conditions. I will tell you as much as I know of the old lady's history. My grandfather held a diplomatic post in the East for many years, and acquired some eastern habits. He brought up his family, I was going to say like savages, at all events after the Arab fashion. He had frequent dealings with the sheiks, and collected a regular arsenal of their weapons, and being a good judge of horseflesh, I believe pocketed many a sum by his dealings. My father and uncle were sent over to England for their education, only once or twice going back to Syria during the vacations. My Aunt Caroline was the only girl. I remember my father often spoke to me of her beauty ; but she never got much education, and was as wild as a hawk. Her one delight was riding. One day my grandfather had made a rendezvous in the desert with an old sheik with whom he had dealings, and my aunt accompanied him. The sheik had his son with him, a strikingly handsome young fellow. They all encamped that night, and at daybreak commenced their respective return journeys. When parting the sheik made a present to my aunt of a most perfect little Arab horse, Hamoud, the son, pointing out the beauties of the animal, and talking in the grave and dignified Arab manner, Aunt Caroline of course knowing Arabic fluently. A few days after their return she had her new favourite out soon after dawn, and was watching him being lunged by the groom. Yielding to an uncontrollable

impulse, she mounted him as she was, having on merely a white lace veil about her head and shoulders, and her dress being a white muslin morning gown. After trying his paces for a while, she put him into a canter through the pine wood which separated their residence from the desert. The servants being quite accustomed to their young mistress's independent ways, went about their business. My aunt was delighted with her new acquisition, and from a canter she let her horse break into a gallop, but soon found she had lost all control over him. On and on she went, the pine forest cleared and she was on the desert, not a soul to be seen as far as the eye could carry. But she noticed that she was on the same track she had come on a few days before accompanied by her father and his servants. The sun rose and became hotter and hotter, the lace veil was a poor defence, and with the swift gallop it was difficult to keep it on her head. Hours seemed to pass. She could hardly keep her seat in the saddle. At last after a fearful ride she came to the place of their meeting with the sheik. She was getting frightened, but knowing so well the habits of horses, she hoped the brute would stop. Not a bit of it. He slackened speed a little, cocked his ears, and then galloped on more swiftly than before—the strain was terrible—till they came in sight of the Arab encampment, the plucky little horse coming to a standstill, whinnying and shaking his head, with nostrils distended, and quivering flanks. Young Hamoud was standing at the door of his tent having heard the ring of the horse's hoofs. He was just in time to catch my aunt as she fell insensible from the reeking horse. He carried her to the women's tent, where she was soon restored, and, though much fatigued, began to like the adventure. She found they were bound for the sea-coast, and from thence they told her she could communicate with her father. She travelled on her little horse, who was quite quiet and tractable in the company of others. The young sheik continually rode by her side, and the upshot was they fell in love with each other. She became his wife, being married according to the Arab customs, a few flowers laid at the door of her tent and then a shower of rice over them, and they were man and wife. You may imagine the feelings of my grandfather. However, he soon had her back, for the young Hamoud was killed in a tribal feud within two years.

"My father, in one of his visits to the East, was accompanied by a college friend, a capital draughtsman. He made a good water-colour sketch of my aunt from her description of her flight, her bright golden hair flying behind her.

"Here it is," said Jack, placing it in my hands, "but I will continue the history. Aunt Caroline never came to England, and after her father's death lived on in a kind of eastern fashion, devoted to her horses, especially to the one that had carried her to her husband. She seems to have had a hankering after Harold Watson, who made the sketch, for she left him £500. Now, listen to the will: 'I will and bequeath to my nephew, John Haldon, of Haldon Hall, all my moneys and lands. All my collection of eastern curiosities, and my father's collection of arms, all these to be placed in the picture gallery of Haldon Hall, which I have heard him describe, but have never seen; and they shall be arranged therein within a year after my death. I also give the sum of £2,000, to be given to any artist who will paint in oils a picture of myself in my flight to my Hamoud's tent, subject to one condition—that it shall be exhibited at the Royal Academy, London, and afterwards hung on the west side of the gallery at Haldon, so that my eyes will always look towards the east. I leave the water-colour sketch I much treasure as an idea for the picture; and, further, it shall be finished within a year of my death, or, in default, the £2,000 shall be given to the British Museum to found an Arab collection.'

"There," said Jack, throwing down the deed, "did you ever hear of such a lot of botheration? Fortunately, there are no restrictions about her land and money; but, Hal, you must pocket the two 'thou,' and produce the picture."

"By Jove! Jack, you are a brick!" I exclaimed, throwing my cigar into the grate, and striding up and down in excitement. "Have you mentioned it to any one else?"

"No, not I! I only read the will through, the other day, to my wife and the girls." He rose with a yawn, saying, "Let us go now to the gallery. We have a good hour before luncheon. I thought of going out for an hour or two this afternoon; my man tells me there is a covey dropped down in the turnips yonder; they won't move till sunset. Did you bring your gun?"

"My dear fellow, how you must have forgotten my habits. I never shot anything in my life, and have no great wish to begin.

No ! I should like to get the chance of commencing my idea for the picture on canvas. It is now September, when did your aunt die ? I won't let the British Museum get hold of that £2,000 if I can help it."

"Oh ! well, she died three months ago, at the end of June ; you will have plenty of time, to-day is the 24th. Fortunately, they have been pretty quick in letting me know the conditions of the will, and you can take it easily, with so much time between now and the opening of the Academy. Come along, I see my wife will be at the terrace door before we get there."

As we crossed the hall Mrs. Haldon and two of the girls entered from the garden. "Where is Netty Sinclair ?" asked Jack, passing his arm through his wife's.

"I believe in the gallery. She says she loves the quiet," answered Mrs. Haldon.

On entering I observed the room more closely ; it ran from north to south, a row of high windows on the east side. At the end Netty Sinclair was standing before an easel. At our approach she covered whatever she was drawing with her portfolio, and slipped her pencil into her apron pocket.

"You are an artist," I said. "May I see what you are doing ?" She laughed in that low way, one is doubtful whether it does not mean weariness, there is so little mirth in it.

"Indeed, I am not. I only wish I were." She passed her hand across her brow, pushing back the wavy hair as she spoke.

"Now, Netty, how can you say so ? You paint plenty of nice things."

"You are good enough to say so, Mr. Haldon, but the nice things, as you call them, would be thought very indifferent by any artist."

"I don't agree with you ; why, you do no end of jolly little pot-boilers."

There was a general laugh as Jack gave vent to his view of art. We followed him to the end of the gallery, now stacked with huge packages, some of which were opened, showing their contents. We made a terrible litter, hauling out the long muskets used by Arabs ; spears, shields, daggers, pistols, every conceivable weapon, saddles, water-skins, rugs. I pounced upon a grand black and white camel's hair Arab cloak, saying, "You must lend me this," shaking it out and hanging it over a high-backed chair.

"Anything you like, Hal, only remember they have to be placed here before the year is out." Jack put on a rather doleful expression as he spoke.

My visit had already exceeded three weeks. The days seemed positively to fly by. Occasionally I made a sketch or two for the picture which was to set me on my legs, if not exactly to make my fortune. But much of my time was taken up watching Netty Sinclair, and the idea struck me that she would do as my model. One morning I was up with the lark (as Jack said the first day I arrived) and went down to the gallery to prepare the picture for which I intended to ask her to be my model, or at least to let me paint her glorious hair. I crept downstairs in my slippers, not wishing to disturb any one at that early hour, and opened the door of the gallery noiselessly. I was startled to see Netty standing before the easel, evidently painting. I longed to approach and look over her shoulder, but it would have been taking a mean advantage, so I purposely made a little noise.

"I beg your pardon," I began, "I did not know you were already painting; may I not see it to-day?" She came towards me, looking wistfully into my face.

"Do not ask me, Mr. Goodwood; may I trust you?" Great tears began to swim in her eyes. I hastened to assure her I would not press her. She quickly recovered herself and said, "I do not ask for myself, but for another."

She made the same movement I had noticed before, drawing her hand across her forehead as if to wipe away thought. She was silent for a moment, and then said, with that sad smile:

"Come, let us go to our respective work; the gallery is large enough for us both." So saying she turned to resume her painting.

"Miss Sinclair," I said, rather with hesitation, "I have a favour to ask. May I paint your hair as you stand at the easel?"

"Yes; would you like it what we girls call 'down?'" So saying, she drew a comb from the coil at the back, and let it fall over her white, loose gown. "One condition, you must go to some distance, and let us be ignorant of each other's work."

Morning after morning we met, both of us working seriously. I forgot the lady who was racing in the desert. I said to myself,

plenty of time for that when I get back. I must have a portrait of Netty Sinclair as well as the hair. Time flew on, and my visit was at an end. We had all helped to arrange the collection, and things were getting straighter. It was a lovely morning in October when I said "good-bye" to Jack and his kind wife. The girls were there at the door. I had shaken hands with Miss Sinclair on the staircase. All my "painting things" were stowed on the top of the carriage, and inside was my picture, carefully packed, looking, however, rather a formidable parcel.

"Well, good-bye, old fellow," said Jack, wringing my hand. "It was mean of you not to let us have a look at the picture, but we shall come up to see it on the walls of Burlington House, and to hand you the two 'thou.' Good-bye."

Halfway down the avenue I saw Netty Sinclair. I would miss all the trains in the world rather than lose the opportunity of looking once again into her thoughtful face. I jumped out almost before the carriage stopped.

"I am so glad to say one 'good-bye' again," I said, taking her hand.

"Yes, and so am I; you are my friend, and I thank you for your kindness. You have not a moment to lose."

"May I write to you?" I asked with some emotion, which she must have seen.

"No! do not ask that, no; good-bye," and she turned down a side-path, waving her hand, the sad smile on her face. I threw myself into the carriage, lost in thought. Could I ever make her care for me? Months went on. I returned to my work, began the picture I was to make £2,000 by, and on another easel placed the portrait of the sweet girl I loved; drawing a curtain over it, but putting many a touch to it from time to time.

The provider of my daily steak renewed his request that I should paint his wife's portrait. She came in all her idea of best clothes. I had to suppress a gold chain and locket, and then she wished her hands drawn so as to show her rings. But this I would not concede. She possessed a priceless lace shawl a brother had brought from foreign parts, she informed me. This I draped her in, and she was soon represented on the canvas. There was a great deal of character in her face, and I became interested in the picture. Finally, I sent it to the Academy with the flying

lady to bring me the two thousand, and there was a third which I sent rather reluctantly. "Should I let all the world see the one I loved to look at, my one ewe lamb? And yet it might bring me again into Netty Sinclair's company. Yes! it should go."

March came and went, and one day I received the usual notice. My pet picture and the portrait were accepted, the flying lady declined. I cannot describe my consternation; £2,000 gone at one swoop! There was nothing to be done. I went to the private view very crestfallen, and wandered through the rooms hardly looking at the catalogue. My eyes were suddenly arrested by a small crowd round one picture, a girl on a beautiful horse flying towards an Arab tent, a handsome young sheik shading his eyes watching her approach. I turned hastily to the book; the artist was Annette Sinclair. I was speechless, and turned again and again to look at the masterly touches. While lost in thought I heard some American say, "These are the two gems of the Academy. The girl with the golden hair painting in the gallery is lovely. I would give a pile of dollars for either, and mean to have them both." "One," I thought, "my good sir, you will never have, for if you mean my golden-haired treasure it shall never be sold." I walked on, and found another little crowd round my own picture. A subject always attracts, I thought.

The critics began their work, and I found myself famous. The portrait of my steak provider's wife was pronounced excellent; "Must be a good likeness," although the lady was unknown; "so much character, &c." The sad-looking girl painting in the gallery at Haldon was pronounced one of the pictures of the season, and many large sums were offered. I soon received orders for more portraits than I could possibly paint in a year or two, and where I had received pounds I now took hundreds.

But I did not meet Netty Sinclair again until I went down in the autumn to see the successful picture hung. Again I was in my old room, and Jack, coming in, said, "I was sorry you did not get the two 'thou,' Hal, and can't make out how you failed when everybody is talking of your wonderful picture, and the light on the hair and all that, but it has made poor Netty's fortune, and she wanted it so badly for her mother; a pity it did not come a year before, the young fellow she was engaged to might not have gone away and died."

I held my breath: the man she was engaged to? I recovered myself enough to ask, "How was that?" turning to look out of the window.

Jack continued: "He was lost in the snow in Canada, where he went to make a home for her, poor girl! I do not think she will ever marry."

"No?" I answered as calmly as I could, longing for him to leave me and let me think it out. I felt very depressed when I went to join the family before dinner, but took courage when I saw a brighter expression upon Netty's gentle face. She sat on my right at dinner, and we talked of our mutual success. After a little while Jack called out in his rather blustering way:

"Well, my boy, I suppose you have made a lot of money with 'the lovely picture,' as my wife calls it. How exactly you hit off Netty's expression."

I only gave him a nod, and turned to my neighbour on my left. A few minutes afterwards I had an opportunity of saying in a low voice to Netty, "I shall never part with that picture, it will always remind me of you—if indeed I could ever forget you. It is my one link to a dream." She gave me a grateful look, but I feared there was no love in her eyes, and that it was all buried in the Canadian snow.

A few days later Jack was reading out the criticisms in the papers: "No. 305 is a masterly picture by Annette Sinclair, a name up to the present unknown in Burlington House. The subject given is, 'My aunt when trying her Arab horse was run away with, and he never stopped until he arrived at his former master's tent.' The expression of terror on the lovely face of the girl, with her fair hair flying behind her, is wonderfully rendered; the horse also is well drawn. Miss Sinclair is happy in her colouring, and is a promising artist. No. 470, 'As I saw her in the old gallery,' is certainly Henry Goodwood's best. We cannot tear ourselves from contemplating the calm repose: one can see from the slanting rays of the sun coming through the stained windows that it is early morning. The rapt expression of the girl, painting at her easel, is beautiful, and her Venetian-red hair falling over some soft cream-coloured gown is most striking. No. 502, 'A portrait,' is another picture by the same artist, which will add to his laurels. The eyes are especially well painted and life-like."

"I won't read any more, Goodwood," said Jack, throwing down

the paper, "else we shall have all the ladies jealous and wanting you to paint their portraits. I know my little woman would be awfully proud to see her eyes well represented on canvas."

"My dear fellow," I at once answered, "if Mrs. Haldon would allow me, I should be only too delighted to paint her during my visit." I turned to my hostess as I spoke, and saw the suggestion met with her approval. Looking at Netty Sinclair I added, "What do you say, Miss Sinclair, shall we start a studio in the picture gallery, while my friend Jack is banging away at the pheasants, and ask Mrs. Haldon to sit for us as our model? Only I must have the position from which I can paint her eyes."

"By all means," Netty replied, looking bright and animated, "I will take Mrs. Haldon *en profile*."

So the time passed, and before many weeks I had the pleasure of seeing my picture (which fortunately met with the approval of Jack and his wife) hung in the gallery by the side of other beautiful women of the same family, who in past centuries had sat for Lely and Romney.

But during those weeks we were not always engaged in painting. I had many opportunities of walking with Netty in the glowing woods, where the paths were strewn with bright leaves of every hue; and then she told me the story of her first love, and of her anxious life assisting her mother, whose means were so very limited before she painted the picture which brought her to the public notice.

The time came all too soon for my departure from Haldon, but Netty's last words, "Yes, write to me sometimes," sent me on my way rejoicing.

In the following spring, when the primroses and blue bells held sweet counsel under the tender green larch trees, Netty Sinclair came down the path from Haldon Hall to Haldon Church, escorted by Jack, his wife following with a few other friends. I could not wait at the altar as directed by my "best man," but went down the aisle to the porch, and there saw the coming of my love, a radiant vision clad in a white serge travelling frock and Gainsborough hat, the only bit of colour about her being her hair turned to gold in the bright sunlight.

"Another picture," I said to myself, "for the Royal Academy; it shall be called, 'My wife's portrait.'"

CLARA SWINFEN.

An Angel's Revenge.

A ROMANCE OF THE JUNGLES.

UNDER the shade of some stately "moroo" oaks on a lofty eminence dominating the beautiful valley of Dehra Doon in Northern India, a quartette of people were playing a rubber of whist—by no means a quiet rubber, for there was a good deal of jangling going on, and a good many "pegs" (whiskies-and-sodas) being consumed. It was a hot, thirsty afternoon towards the end of April. The scene was a shooting encampment in the jungle, and sundry tiger-skins hanging from the branches of the trees indicated the nature of the sport for which this expedition to the "Doon" had been organized.

The view commanded by the camp was superb, the valley spreading out below in all its tropical luxuriance and wealth of colour; the patches of light green tea plantations, here and there the gorgeous Judas tree, the undulating forests of rhododendrons in full bloom, contrasting with the dark pine-covered hills; glistening snow-fed streams and rivers, which came tumbling down from the lofty Himalayas, twined through the jungle like silver snakes; the famous Siwálik Range, the metropolis of big game, closing in the valley from the plains, while on the other hand rose the Landaur and Mussoorie Hills, beyond which gleamed the white heaven-kissing cones of the distant "snows."

The whist players consisted of Colonel Lipcott, the promoter of the shooting trip, Georgie Gushington, his partner (a pretty little widow from Mussoorie), Dr. Hutton and Captain Tristram. Most of the jangling was done by the colonel, for Mrs. Gushington was certainly a very provoking partner.

"Confound it all, Georgie," cried he, as that lady made yet another mistake, "that's the third time you've trumped my best card."

"Oh, colonel, have I really? I'm *so* sorry."

"Don't mention it. I don't mind losing *my* money, but I don't like to see you lose yours."

"Ho, ho, ho! magnanimous philosopher!" laughed the others.

"Capital joke, isn't it?" growled the colonel. "Go on, doctor; your deal;" then in a stentorian key, "Ramnuggar, whisky sherarb belátee pánce lao, julde!" (Bring a whisky-and-soda, quickly.)

"Bahoot áccha, sarb" (Very good, sir), replied a guttural voice from behind the mess tent.

Other "pegs" were ordered, more cheroots lighted, and the game proceeded.

"Now, partner, please," said Georgie, eagerly awaiting her turn to play.

"Beg pardon—hearts, eh?" exclaimed the colonel following suit. "Ah, whist never forgives."

"But *you* do, colonel."

"Oh yes, *I* do."

"Then I don't care—there!" and the fair lady plumped down the ace, which she had been carefully bottling up.

"Eh? excuse me," observed the doctor quietly, "but you refused hearts just now, Mrs. Gushington."

"Oh, I'm sure I didn't!"

"Of course she did," roared the colonel.

"Ha, ha, ha! a revoke, by jingo!" laughed Tristram, and a commotion followed, which ended in the highly irritated old officer throwing the cards at the head of Ramnuggar, whom he caught grinning behind his chair.

In the midst of this a handsome young woman of three-and-twenty, dressed as a Sister of Mercy, appeared from a tent on the other side of the camp and approached the players.

"Hush! oh, hush! for pity's sake!" she appealed, with uplifted hand. "Remember," and she pointed impressively to the tent she had just left, "*that is a case of life or death!*"

A sudden silence followed; the whist party seemed rather abashed.

"Bless my soul," apologized the colonel in a stage whisper. "Awfully sorry—quite forgot—poor old Baldie! and how is he to-night, sister?"

"He was easier and dozing," replied the sister, in the same tone of reproach, "but this noise has disturbed him."

"Tut, tut! oh, how thoughtless of us," murmured Georgie, rising and leaving the table. "No more whist for *me*, thank you."

"I should think not," mumbled the colonel feelingly.

Meanwhile Dr. Hutton stole sheepishly across on tip-toe towards the sick tent, and at the same time a tall soldier in undress Highland uniform drew aside the "purdah," came out, and saluted him stiffly with:

"It's all right, doctor; he's dropped off again."

Dr. Hutton peeped into the tent, then went up to the camp-bed, and stood looking at the prostrate officer lying there.

There had been a fearful accident in the jungle three weeks before, when Captain Archibald Blane, of the Ross-shire Highlanders, had been badly mauled by a tiger. Hence the presence of the sister in camp, Sister Evelyn, from Mussoorie, who, hearing of the accident, immediately volunteered her services, and came down to nurse the unfortunate officer. Georgie Gushington had only joined the party that morning. She was passing through the valley on her way to the plains, and had called to make inquiries, when the colonel prevailed upon her (an old friend of his) to enliven them with her presence for a few hours. He was rather sorry he had done so now.

"Really, we ought to be ashamed of ourselves, sister," said Georgie, "but we got quite carried away by the game, didn't we, colonel?"

"We did, indeed!"

"I hardly realized what a terrible thing had occurred when I first heard of it——"

"Ah, this is an hospital camp now, my dear. All our sport has been turned to sorrow," and the colonel finished his "peg" at a gulp, then sat down on an empty soda-water box near and puffed at his cheroot reflectively, Sister Evelyn taking his vacant chair.

"It's too sad," rejoined Georgie with a sigh. "I don't quite understand yet how it happened. Do tell me."

"Well, the fact is," explained the colonel, "we were beating up some jungle for a wounded tiger, a brute of a man-eater, you know, when the infuriated beast suddenly charged Baldie Blane's elephant and made it bolt under a tree, a big branch of which swept howdah and all into the thick rumnah grass, and hurled poor Baldie right into the jaws of the tiger. Gad! Awful moment that! Young Cecil Reinhardt, who was riding in the next howdah, could hear the savage devil worrying the poor fellow, but couldn't see either man or tiger, as they were hidden

in the long grass. In a moment the brave young chap jumped to the ground and at risk of his own life dived in to the rescue. He had nothing but a native "tulwar" (sword) in his hand, for he couldn't use his rifle, but by a bit of luck, combined with pluck, managed to polish off the maddened brute, and dragged poor Baldie out, more dead than alive."

"Ah, *devilish* plucky thing!" interposed the doctor, who had now rejoined the group. "He'd have got the V.C. if the enemy had been a man instead of a man-eater, and blood-money too, for his own arm was badly lacerated. Hulloo, Cecil!" for at that moment a good-looking, well set-up young fellow, of about five-and-twenty, strolled into the camp, with his left arm in a sling, and approached the others.

"We were just talking of you, my boy," said the colonel; "explaining to the ladies how you'd distinguished yourself and qualified for a place in the Victoria Cross gallery. So if they wish to go in for a little bit of hero-worship, I daresay you wouldn't object, would you?"

Reinhardt muttered something about "sparing his blushes," when his eyes met those of Sister Evelyn fixed upon him in candid admiration, which made him colour up in real earnest. She lowered her eyes immediately, and perhaps the blush was mutual. At all events, Cecil felt a delicious glow in the region of his heart, which was a dangerous symptom. With a forced air of carelessness to cover this little episode, for he dreaded the inevitable chaff of his fellow sportsmen, he made another impromptu seat of a convenient hamper and lit a cheroot, without again venturing a look in the sister's direction.

"Well, as you may imagine," continued the colonel, finishing his story, "it was a precious gloomy ride back to camp that night through the dark forests, uncommonly like a funeral, with that poor mangled fellow"—nodding in the direction of the sick tent—"in the leading howdah, his brave young friend there beside him, the doctor staunching their wounds, and the blood-covered man-eater slung over a pad elephant in rear. It was a solemn, ghastly procession, I can tell you, as the unwieldy elephants shuffled into camp, one by one, under the flare of the torches, and knelt down to be relieved of their burdens. 'Gad! I shall never forget it. I thought poor Baldie had gone when we lifted him out of the howdah.'"

"He's got a wonderful constitution," remarked the doctor, "or he wouldn't have survived till morning."

"It's you, I believe, who have kept him alive so long, sister," said Tristram. "May God reward you for flying down here like an angel on your errand of mercy."

"And do you think there's no hope?" asked Georgie.

"Where there's life there is always hope, but his injuries are terrible," replied Sister Evelyn.

"Bless my soul, this is the irony of fate indeed," said the colonel; "a fine fellow like that bowled over just when he'd got everything worth living for."

"You mean——?" began Georgie.

"Money, to be sure. Twelve thousand a year—splendid property in Northumberland—dropped into the fee simple by a delicious fluke, and was going home to take possession after this trip. I wonder what he'll do with it if he can't," added the colonel reflectively. "He's got no relations at all—told me so himself. Twelve thousand a year—fee simple. Damme, it quite excites a fellow!"

Colonel Lipcott was a sordid soldier in more senses than one. A mercenary, calculating individual, and since he knew that Blane had no kith or kin, there had been considerable speculation in his mind as to what the injured man would do with his property if he so far recovered as to be able to make a will. That he would recover entirely seemed altogether beyond the pale of possibility. The colonel thought that he himself stood the best chance of a handsome legacy, or perhaps indeed a substantial annuity, on the strength of their old friendship, and next to himself he fancied Cecil Reinhardt would probably drop into something, if Blane got to know of that plucky rescue. And, again, there might be a little corner in the will for the nursing sister. Who could tell? And so on. In short, the colonel's brain was a kind of betting-ring, his thoughts the bookmakers laying the odds on or against each person's chance of drawing a prize. It was as exciting as the Calcutta Derby Lottery.

"Well, if he does get over it, poor fellow," said Georgie, "the next thing he'll want to have everything worth living for is a wife, isn't it colonel?"

"Ah, quite so," returned the old officer, adding to himself, "Um, yes, wouldn't you like to set your cap at him, my dear, if

you got the chance. 'Pon my soul, *regular* beast of prey your Anglo-Indian widow! A man-eater's a poodle-dog to her! Ah, quite so, Georgie," he continued aloud, with mock gallantry:

"Fee simple and the simple fee,
And all the fee in tail,
Are nothing when compared to thee,
'Thou best of fees—female!"

At which there was a laugh.

During this Sister Evelyn rose from her seat.

"Really, I think," she remarked gravely, "that such sentiments at such a time are decidedly out of place," and she left the group without saying more and went back to her patient.

"Um, eh! She's quite right, she's quite right," muttered the colonel, looking after her, "considering it's a case of life, not wife. Well, well, she's kept him out of the grave so long, let's hope she'll pull him through yet."

Let us hope he did hope so, but with all those speculations in his mind as to the possible disposal of the sick man's property such a sentiment seems scarcely consistent.

The nights in camp at this time, preceding the monsoons, were singularly beautiful: still, soft and balmy, with a brilliant moon flooding the fair valley and silver-tipping the trees and jungle. The crests of the Siwalik Hills, clothed in their dark primeval forests, stood out in silhouette against the deep blue sky. The sportsmen's tents, bathed in the cold light, gleamed amid the "tope" of oaks and deodars like white phantoms. The smoke from the camp fires rose upward straight through the overhanging branches, for the night air was perfectly motionless. On such an evening, at some distance from the group of sportsmen, who lounged lazily in their long-armed, cane-bottomed chairs, smoking and chatting round the burning logs, stood two figures under the deep shadow of a large peepul-tree.

Presently these figures moved out together into the shimmering moonlight; they were Cecil Reinhardt and Sister Evelyn.

"Oh, don't go back yet," he pleaded.

"I dare not stay away any longer. Remember why I am here."

"Yes, yes, I do, but——"

"You are a soldier ; you would not have me desert my post," she said smiling.

"Oh no—but only a few minutes more—just a little walk further. I—I want to tell you something."

Then she yielded, and they strolled slowly side by side along the summit of the hill away from the tents.

The romance of the lovely scene around entered into the souls of both. Such a night as it was for lovers, so quiet, so peaceful ; the hushed stillness being occasionally disturbed by strange weird sounds that fell upon the ear, and reminded them of the wildness of the locality and the close proximity of the tiger-haunted jungles ; the cry of the karkur deer re-echoing like a whispered "hark !" down in the valley ; the muffled roar of some prowling leopard in the neighbouring thickets, the howl of a wolf baying the moon, the whistling of wild-fowl high overhead as they swept swiftly past in the dark heavens, and now and again, with startling suddenness, the discordant yell of the scavenging jackal, sneaking about the outskirts of the camp in search of offal. For several moments Cecil Reinhardt did not speak again. He seemed to be collecting himself for an effort. This was his first appearance in the part as a love-maker, and he was coy and timid as a school-girl.

"Can you not guess, dear ?" he blurted out at last, then growing bolder as he heard himself call her "dear," went on with more warmth, "Oh, Evelyn, sweet Sister Evelyn, help me."

"Yes, I think I can guess," she answered softly, then of a sudden added in another tone, "Oh, *don't* tell me, please don't say it, Mr. Reinhardt."

"But why not ?"

"Because I—I cannot listen to you."

"But why not ?" he reiterated. "Evelyn !" and he seized her hand. "I *must* say it—listen, darling, I——"

"No, no—I tell you I *cannot* listen to you," she cried in a tone as of sudden alarm, then half to herself, "Oh, it's all my fault ; it's all my fault ; how could I ? how dare I ? Mr. Reinhardt," in a calmer, but firm tone, "please let go my hand."

"Not till I have said it, and received your answer."

"You have my answer beforehand ; it is useless. I—I—oh, spare yourself and me ; not another word, I beseech you." And she broke from him, with burning, tingling cheeks, and hurried

back in the direction of the tents, leaving him standing where he was, puzzled, bewildered, yet not entirely discouraged.

It is a week later ; the time is midnight ; the scene the interior of the sick tent. The hapless victim of the tiger accident has hitherto lain in a state of coma, but at last consciousness has returned. He is sitting propped up by pillows on the small camp-bed. A cooling draught stands close at hand on a table, on which are also some medicine bottles, lint bandages, and other hospital appliances.

Sister Evelyn is leaning over him tenderly. His right hand is paralyzed, but his left clasps hers tightly as he speaks to her in broken murmurs. A dim light from a shaded lamp falls on the two figures. They are alone. Private Dundas, the soldier servant, has withdrawn from the tent, for this is a sacred interview, an interview between husband and wife, and he only of all the others in camp is in the secret. He stands some little distance off, alert, and within hail of the nurse's call.

"And—and this is your revenge, Evelyn!" the sick man whispers, with painful effort. "Ah, an angel's revenge! Oh, Evelyn, after all my heartless, shameful conduct——"

"No, no, don't speak of the past," she answers gently, "forget it. Think of the future, Baldie ; oh, my husband, the everlasting future."

"I do ; I have tried so hard to pray. Oh, Evelyn, pray for me." Every hour since she came to nurse him had she prayed for him with all her soul, and now at his trembling, feverish request she sank down on her knees by the cot and poured out her heart to God in a fervent appeal for mercy.

He needed her prayers indeed. Archibald Blane had sinned against this woman most grievously and cruelly. Five years ago he was married to her at Salisbury Cathedral, and took her out to India, a bright, happy, lovely English girl. Within a year of their marriage he had crushed her spirit and broken her heart by his wanton cruelty and open-faced infidelity with another married woman. Too proud for her family's sake to sue for a divorce, Evelyn Blane fled from her worthless husband and her wretched home, as from a plague-stricken prison, and buried her sorrow among the sisters of mercy at Mussoorie. By-and-by he exchanged into another regiment, carefully held his tongue about

his marriage, and passed among his new brother-officers and friends as a happy bachelor, though sundry rumours of the truth reached one or two of them ; but, at all events, Colonel Lipcott and those in camp were in ignorance of Mrs. Blane's existence. That lady, on the other hand, when she heard of her husband's fearful accident, went to nurse him from purely merciful and disinterested motives, and knew nothing whatever of the property to which he had unexpectedly succeeded.

"Colonel, I want—I want you to witness my signature, please, and you too, doctor—that is, my mark. This hand is dead—I—I cannot sign."

The colonel and Doctor Hutton had been roused out of their first sleep by Private Dundas, who summoned them at 2 a.m. to his dying master's bedside.

It was only one illiterate, badly scrawled line which they had been called up in the middle of the night to witness the signing of ; a line drawn out by Private Dundas himself at his master's dictation. It ran thus :

"I leve everithing I may die possesed of to my wife uncondishonully."

And before daybreak poor Blane had passed to his account with all his imperfections on his head.

Sister Evelyn remained in the sisterhood for three years after her husband's death, during which period she devoted two-thirds of her God-sent wealth to charitable purposes, as though in propitiation for the sins of the dead. And at the expiration of those three years Cecil Reinhardt appealed to her once more, and this time not in vain.

THEODORE A. THARP.

N.B. The local colouring of the above little story is a faithful sketch from the writer's personal reminiscences of Dehra Doon, during ten years' service in the North West Provinces of India.

John Farrington's Return.

By E. M. JAMESON.

"REALLY, Janet, you must allow Rachel to join our party in Devonshire. Stella has set her heart upon having her, and will not be denied. See, I think they are discussing it even now."

Mrs. Raynes glanced with a somewhat perplexed frown upon her face towards the tea table, where, in their corner of the cosy drawing-room, two girls were smiling and holding a low-toned conversation.

"I think not, thank you," she replied; "Rachel must stay with me for the present; later on we shall be going for a change of air somewhere, and that must content her."

Her old friend looked at her in some surprise.

"You are not afraid to trust the child with me. Of course not; you know that, after my own children, Rachel occupies first place in my heart. What can be your reason then?"

A sudden thought seemed to strike her as Mrs. Raynes shook her head in feeble protest, and she bent forward to lay her hand on the other's arm.

"You are not afraid of——that?" she whispered. "My dear, we shall be miles away, and, besides——"

"Yes, it is that which is troubling me," interrupted Mrs. Raynes, a timid, slender little woman, the direct opposite of her *vis-à-vis*, whose generous proportions gave her that look best described as "motherly." "Suppose she ever knew, after all these years, that her father—oh, my poor Rachel, it would kill her. She is such a proud girl, my poor niece!"

"My dear, I know that you must dread such a thing above all things; I should, if Stella were in Rachel's place."

"But why should a visit to Devonshire, or even to Dartmoor itself, bring the truth to light? You know they go by number there, not by name; and, even so, Rachel bears another name, and not her father's, as she supposes."

"But I have always had a dread of her going to Devonshire,"

said Mrs. Raynes with a strange persistence. "You may smile, Mary. You always were, even when we were girls at school together, so very strong-minded—but the feeling of terror has always been there. And, as is invariably the way, Rachel has had a greater number of invitations to that part of England than any other. Indeed, I wonder that her suspicions have not been roused ere this, for I always make her refuse them."

"Well, the sooner you allow her to go to Devonshire the better," responded Mrs. Burnett briskly, with her customary common sense. "Indeed, Janet, you make bugbears for yourself. I fear that this time you will find some difficulty in getting Rachel to refuse. I am sorry, but she and Stella have talked so much about it. And, after all, how long ago is it? Why, it must be twelve—no, fifteen years since."

She ticked the numbers off on her plump, jewelled fingers.

They had been talking in an undertone, but just then the taller of the girls rose from her low chair and approached them. She overheard the word fifteen.

"What are you counting so earnestly?" she asked, a smile gleaming in her dark eyes and softening the curves of a somewhat determined mouth. "Reckoning up the days until we go to Devonshire? How delightful it will be; I may go, Aunt Janet?" She dropped on her knees beside her aunt and spoke coaxingly. "You know I want to go to Devonshire of all places, and somehow it never comes off."

Mrs. Raynes glanced appealingly across the bent head at Mrs. Burnett, who nodded vigorously with a frown of insistence, and, as Janet Raynes had always wavered before her friend's stronger will, so she gave way now.

"Yes, you may go, Rachel."

It was not a very gracious assent, but Rachel Harrington was too happy to notice any deficiencies.

"What were you counting?" she again asked, turning to Mrs. Burnett. "You said fifteen as I came up. Surely not fifteen days before we start? Stella said a week."

"No, dear, I was speaking of something else," and the eyes of the two old friends met in a pained glance.

There was something so sad in the unconscious longing of this girl for a sight of the county in a corner of which her father was working out his days in the bondage of shame. But,

as Mrs. Burnett said, she was none the more likely to discover the secret that had been so jealously guarded hitherto, because she went to the locality. Rachel was under the impression that her father had died in India, and her most treasured possession was a faded portrait, taken when he was a lad of seventeen, with a frank smile in the dark eyes that were so like Rachel's own.

There was no other portrait of him in the house, and the girl never found her aunt very anxious to talk of her dead sister's husband. In her own mind Rachel endowed her father with every virtue under the sun. She sometimes wondered that there were no belongings of his about, only this faded little portrait that she had found one day when fumbling among her aunt's possessions. They had never been sent home from India, her aunt said, at the same time breathing an inward prayer that heaven would forgive her all her untruthful statements.

"There are some lies that *must* be told," she said one day to her old schoolfellow, Mrs. Burnett, with a vigour that much astonished the latter; "my poor darling's life must *not* be blighted by that man's wickedness!"

"Janet, do you think John Farringford was really guilty of that crime? When I think of him as he used to be, such a merry, affectionate fellow, if at times passionate, I have my doubts."

"There is no room for doubt, Mary. You know how my sister loved him? Even she did not doubt, and it broke her heart. Promise me one thing, never let Rachel go to Princetown, or near the prison. I wish, oh! *how* I wish that she were not going with you."

Mrs. Burnett would have lost all patience had she not seen that her friend was genuinely consumed by this strange anxiety. She gave the latter's shoulder an affectionate shake.

"I promise," she said, "to do all in my power; but get rid of such fanciful notions, Janet; they make life a burden to you."

The following week they started for Devonshire. Mrs. Burnett had taken a furnished house on Dartmoor for a month or six weeks, and they were a merry party of six with their hostess to chaperon them.

The house was long and rambling, and far from any other habitation, with the purple distances of Dartmoor on every side and the giant tors frowning down upon it. The rooms were fur-

nished shabbily, and hardly owned a chair that might be sat upon with any safety. In many ways the house was not all that had been represented, but they were a happy-go-lucky set, on pleasure bent, and the culinary and other shortcomings, at which they would have grumbled in their own homes, only added to the fun in their present quarters. The caretakers who had been left in the house did the principal part of the work, and bore a strong resemblance to the weather-stained old house, where they had lived year in, year out, for many a long day.

The weather was as a rule all that could be desired, and the young people explored the places of interest for miles around ; Mrs. Burnett, by skilful manœuvring, succeeded in steering them away from Princetown. Not that she thought it would really matter, but she remembered her promise to Rachel's aunt. One day some one got on the subject of the great convict prison, and an expedition to the town was planned. It was a distance of about ten miles, and they decided to catch the coach at the cross roads and spend the night at Princetown as the coach would not return.

It was impossible to raise any real objection, yet Mrs. Burnett experienced a curious sense of relief when, on the morning of the expedition, Stella came to her room to tell her that Rachel was unwell with a severe cold and sore throat. It was the result, no doubt, of walking five miles in a downpour of rain the day before. Either the excursion must be postponed or Rachel be left behind. The former plan was decided upon, until Rachel made a late appearance and insisted, hoarsely, upon their going. Her hostess was sorry for Rachel, but, after all, it would be an easy way of keeping her promise.

"Rachel is right," she said, "we have only a few days now to be here, and the weather may change. She and I will keep one another company."

"Indeed, we will do nothing of the kind," said Rachel quickly, "I shall be quite contented here with Mrs. Hext and her husband. There are plenty of books to read, and the quiet will do me good—it really will. I often have these colds and relaxed throats. They vanish as suddenly as they come if I am careful, and I promise to be that, for I don't want to spoil my last few days. Stella, Bob, do persuade your mother to go."

Mrs. Burnett hesitated. Rachel looked distressed to the verge of tears, but it was evident that the girl had a bad cold and Mrs. Burnett did not like leaving her ; she gave way at last, however, before Rachel's pleading.

"I don't think that I am really sorry after all," said Rachel presently. "Of course I know people are not allowed to go over the prison, but even the most distant view of the convicts must be saddening. It is as though *we* were exulting in our freedom whilst they—poor things! Do you remember the story Mrs. Hext told us of one who escaped some years ago? I am sure I could never give one up to justice even if I had it in my power to do so. No, I don't want to see them or the prison. Do go, there's a dear." And Mrs. Burnett consented to go.

Despite her protestations, Rachel found the day very long in the silent house. Mrs. Hext meant to be kind, but only succeeded in being so fussy that the girl was glad when she retreated to her own quarters for some hours. The kitchen was at the farther end of the house, down a long passage, and the old couple never made a stir.

Dusk was coming on, and Rachel stood close to the long window in the fading light, in order to finish her book, when a movement outside the window made her start and drop the volume. A figure was standing without, cowering close to the glass, a figure as grey and indistinct as the shadows. Rachel was a brave girl, and for a moment she thought that the others might have returned and that Bob was playing her a trick. But as she peered closer, her heart stood still with fear, and she turned to fly for help. The grey figure raised its hand with a frantic movement, and obeying some strong impulse Rachel unlatched the window. Again she shrank away, for she knew by his clothing that he must be one of the convicts from Princetown. What was she to do? He caught a fold of her dress as she turned. "For the love of God," he said, "for the love of God."

She hesitated. He might be the greatest criminal unhung, but all that was womanly and tender in her nature rose within her. He looked such a wretched, hunted creature, as he cowered before her, with hands and clothing torn, and dim eyes looking at her from their sunken lids. He glanced about him furtively. There was nothing to fear from this shattered wreck of humanity ; why, she herself in her splendid young vitality could overpower him.

Her courage reasserted itself and she remembered the remark she had made only that morning.

"I will not betray you," she said gently, "if I can possibly help it."

He nodded. A dull apathy began to settle upon him, and a grey ashen look crept across his face.

He must be frightfully ill, she thought, for he was like a skeleton, and she could hear his breath rattling in his throat. She motioned him to a chair and went out of the room.

"Mrs. Hext," he heard her say, "will you take some supper to the dining-room for me? My throat is better, and I should like something to eat. The lamp, too, please, and then I shall want nothing more to-night."

The listening man muttered an exclamation. She was a plucky girl to remain up with an escaped felon. In a kind of dream he heard the jingle of glasses and the bolting and barring of the front door, and the shambling footsteps retreating in the distance.

Then he remembered no more until he came to himself from a long fainting fit to find Rachel kneeling beside him, trying to force some brandy down his throat. He sat up presently on the floor, with his head resting against a chair. The craving for food had gone, and he pushed away the plate of tempting chicken and ham she had put before him.

"Do try to eat it," the girl said, something like tears dimming the shining of her eyes, "it will do you good. You—you frightened me just now. You must be very weak."

Again he essayed to eat, but again he put the plate down, this time with a muttered word of apology and a strange unaccustomed sensation in his throat. She glanced at him curiously. If it were not absurd, she could almost fancy him to be a gentleman. Mrs. Hext had said once, she remembered, that even after twenty years of imprisonment it was possible to distinguish among the convicts those who were, by birth and education, gentlemen. His sunken eyes opened and met hers fixed upon him.

"You are a brave girl," he said; "it is not many that would act as you've done. I wouldn't harm a hair of your head, even if I, by it, should regain strength and freedom. You may not believe the word of such as I am, but I mean it."

He closed his eyes again, and only the sound of his laboured

breathing broke the stillness. All her life afterwards, Rachel Harrington remembered that strange evening, and her watch by the escaped convict. He lay, with hands clenched, and peaceful face as if, after life's fitful fever, he should be content to sleep his life away. Even Rachel, with her limited experience, could see that he looked a dying man. She felt strongly tempted to confide in Hext and his wife, but even when she stirred the eyes of the convict were upon her. She told him that when the others returned she could not possibly keep his presence a secret.

"I don't think it will matter much, then," he replied; "I daresay by that time the authorities will be on my track and I *hope* I shall be beyond their reach. Perhaps," he continued, a minute or two later, opening his sunken eyes and looking at Rachel where she sat with clasped hands, the glow from the lamp shining upon her and disclosing the perplexity of her face, "perhaps you think it was hardly worth while for me to escape only in time to die. But I couldn't die *there*. No, I felt that I must be free to die. My God! after fifteen years of captivity to breathe the air of freedom again! I don't know how I managed it; I suppose Fate was kind, for Providence must have given me up as a bad job years ago." There was a pause; Rachel was leaning forward listening in a strained intensity of sympathy. "Will you tell me your name?" he asked presently.

"My name is Rachel Harrington."

"Will you tell me more about yourself?" And Rachel told him of her peaceful life, and did not notice the absorbing interest that filled his face with a kind of flickering strength as she spoke.

"And your father?" he asked.

"He died in India." And to her own surprise as she looked back in after days on this strangest incident of her life, she remembered how she told him, this escaped felon, of her father's portrait, and the thoughts she used to weave around his memory. And how, though at the time unnoticed, the remembrance of tears in a convict's eyes surprised her.

He, in his turn, told how he had himself to thank for blighting his own life, and the lives of others. "And I don't believe that when a man suffers for a sin committed in a fit of passion, as I have suffered for fifteen years—such long, endless, crawling years of agony—that there's much worse waiting for him in the life hereafter. It's a comfort to a man to think that, anyhow."

Later on, when Rachel had left him, and was, as he hoped, asleep, John Farringford took a long pull at the brandy bottle that stood upon the table, and rose to his feet.

He stood for a moment beside the chair so lately occupied by Rachel ; touched lingeringly with his hard, toil-worn fingers the scrap of needlework that lay near, and a terrible spasm of pain contracted his face.

"My own brave little girl," he muttered huskily, "you shall never know of your father's disgrace from me. My God ! what I've missed all these years !"

He unlatched the window, and, without a backward glance, passed out into the mist and darkness that lay upon the moor.

A Flying Column, 1857-8.

IT is creditable to the country that, amidst the stress and hurry of this end of the century, a statue of Lord Strathnairn is to be erected in London. Those who were no longer children in 1858 are not indeed likely to forget the campaign of the Malwa field force, but since that eventful year another generation has arisen, and has even passed *la première jeunesse*, while the rising race seem to think that the Indian Mutiny should be regarded as ancient history; and history, ancient or modern, is a science to be studied only in preparation for exams. They say, "We've heard of Clyde and Outram; but who was Strathnairn?"

I have before me a few letters written by a subaltern in the 14th Light Dragoons—letters which are easy reading—not formal history, and they give some account of the war in Central India, when Lord Strathnairn (then Sir Hugh Rose) commanded the Malwa field force.

The first outbreak of the mutiny occurred at Meerut (Marath), where on Sunday, the 10th of May, 1857, the sepoy, during evening service, set fire to the bungalows, liberated eighty-five native troopers who had been confined for mutinous behaviour, and let loose the other prisoners—common jail-birds. Aided by the lowest of the population, they spent the night in murdering the English residents—men, women and children. Meanwhile the British troops, strangely unconscious of the sufferings and murder of their countrymen, bivouacked on the parade-ground and slept!

On the 12th the Mogul was restored to power, and the European inhabitants of Delhi were massacred.

When the news of these events reached Lord Elphinstone, the governor of Bombay, he promptly sent such troops as he could muster in the direction of Central India. It was a small force to send against armed rebels who had been trained and disciplined by British officers.

"We are marching," wrote the subaltern before mentioned in a letter dated "Ahmednugger, June 19th, 1857," "with a battery of artillery, a staunch native infantry regiment, and some sappers

and miners. We expect to be joined by a wing of the Queen's 86th. and we march to-morrow in the direction of Aurangabad to look after the Nizam's cavalry, who have mutinied."

This small force was soon after joined by Colonel C. S. Stuart, of the Bombay army, and under his command they were called "Stuart's flying column." Leaving Aurangabad on the 12th of July, they marched to Mhow, where they were enthusiastically welcomed by those who had taken refuge within its walls. The garrison and English residents on hearing their approach went out two miles to meet them, greeted them with ringing cheers, and returned laden with the rifles and knapsacks of their guests. Several of the sub.'s letters are dated from Mhow, but the column was not long stationary; they captured Mundesore, and also Dhar, whence they took nine lacs of rupees, defeated the rebels who had advanced from Nemuch, and crushed rebellion in Malwa.

Before Mundesore an incident occurred which showed that the sepoy could not stand a charge of British cavalry, however small in number.

A picket was stationed on a spot where rising ground partly concealed it, when the vedette gave notice that a large body of the enemy had issued from the fortress, and had rapidly formed themselves into three divisions, with the evident intention of attacking the camp. The sub. who was in command of the picket immediately sent to inform the brigadier of this movement; and in a few minutes he heard the trumpet and bugle sound for all to turn out. The rebels came on quickly, cheering or yelling as they came up the hill. The sub. remarked, "We must try to check them, or they will be down on us before our troops are ready to receive them."

He then placed himself in front of the troopers and said to them, "Is there a man here who would not like to cut his way through them?"

The sergeant answered for them: "There is not a man here but what would cut his way through any number, led by you, sir."

The troopers were then formed in single file to show as large a front as possible, there being only twenty men, including the lieutenant and the sergeant.

The sub. then took his post in front of the right and ordered

the sergeant to place himself in front of the left, with the object of keeping the men together, a position on which their lives depended, which fact the sub. endeavoured to impress upon them. "Now, men, keep together," he said, "and we will show them what English cavalry can do."

Riding at a brisk trot, they met the enemy—infantry and cavalry—as they rose over the brow of the hill; the sub. gave the word "Charge!" and this handful of men rode through the rebels and back again, throwing them into the greatest confusion. On their return they were supported by Captain Orr and his native cavalry and easily drove the rebels back to the walls of the fortress.

The sub.'s charge was mentioned by Colonel Gall in a despatch which appeared in the *Times* of February the 25th, 1858.

After their six months' excursion, the column re-entered Indore in triumph on the 14th of December, and dined together in a mess-room hung with the captured flags of the mutineers.

Sir Hugh Rose arrived on the 17th. "I have been doing escort duty," writes the sub., "to Sir Robert Hamilton, the resident, and had a standing invitation to the residency table. There I met a little Irishwoman who had been in hiding four days and nights, dressed as a native, and was hunted all the time. She talks of it all with the utmost coolness. With Sir Robert came Sir Hugh Rose—a Crimean hero—who now commands us."

The force now consisted of two brigades, the first commanded by Brigadier Stuart, of the Bombay Army, the second by Brigadier Steuart, of the 14th Light Dragoons. They were joined by 800 troops from Bhopal, faithful then under the beneficent rule of Sikander the Begum, as now under that of her most loyal daughter, the Nawab Shahjahan, reigning Begum, G.C.S.I. and C.I. Sir Hugh marched with the second brigade on the 16th of January (the first, which set out from Mhow, marching in a parallel line to it in the direction of Gunah). Having twice defeated the Rajah of Banpore, he pushed on to Sagar, which for more than six months had been held isolated in the heart of a rebel country, mainly through the fidelity of the 31st Native Infantry, who continued staunch and true to the end. In February, 1858, Sir Hugh was but fifteen miles from Jhansi.

And here a difficulty occurred. He received orders from Lord Canning to march against the fort Charkhari, eighty miles distant.

Sir Robert Hamilton, the agent of the Governor-General, received a similar despatch.

To have delayed the retribution which the Ranee of Jhansi so richly deserved would have greatly encouraged the mutineers, and might have enabled her to strengthen her position, with the assistance of her friend Tantia Topee. And to punish Jhansi for the cold-blooded murder of sixty Europeans—men, women and children—was one important object of the campaign.

"Jhansi," says Colonel Malleon, "was the stronghold of one of the authors of the mutiny. To leave the objective point when so close to it in order to attack a distant fortress . . . would be an act so devoid of common sense, that Sir Robert Hamilton courageously resolved to give Sir Hugh the means by which he could evade the order, positive though it was. He wrote accordingly to Lord Canning stating that he had taken upon himself the entire responsibility of directing, as Governor-General's agent, Sir Hugh Rose to proceed with his operations against Jhansi. Fortified by this order, Sir Hugh set out for and reached Jhansi on the 21st."

This fortress, which surprised Sir Hugh by its formidable strength, stands on a rock which commands the city and surrounding country, and is built of solid granite. A tower, called the White Turret, had been raised in height by the rebels and armed with heavy ordnance. The city was four miles and a half in circumference, and was surrounded by a massive wall from eighteen to thirty feet in height. The place was garrisoned by 12,000 men, at the head of whom was the Ranee herself.

Here is a letter dated "Camp before Jhansi, March 29th, 1858:"

"The first three days we were out here, I was with an outpost on the other side of the town, with three troops and half a troop of horse artillery. We had not a rag over our heads day or night, nor a bush or a stone to get under. I think we were a good deal worse off than Jonah, as he didn't wear leather-strapped overalls and belts, and then he had his gourd, and ours, in the shape of tents, did not come till the third day. I don't know when we shall take the place; they say it is stronger than Mooltan was. It is a most beautiful place, a case of 'every prospect pleasing, and only,' &c. They won't have very much longer to be vile in, though—only wait till we slip the 80th Royal

County Downs through the breach, with our fellows on the other side to cut them up. The worst of it is, the outposts are twelve miles round, so they may escape some dark night. We are making it pretty hot for them ; there are two ten-inch mortars, a big howitzer shelling them, and two twenty-four-pounders blazing away night and day. I would give anything to be in the Horse Artillery, I am so fond of the guns. I look upon a howitzer as a human being. Oh, to see a shell go out of a mortar from one of our batteries, let the time be night ! It goes up like a golden crow and whistles all the time, as if it were going up to heaven, and then down it comes, and you know that it has spread annihilation among the enemy. The trumpet has sounded, and I am not dressed, so good bye.

"April 2nd.—Since I left off writing this, we have been doing a little business. The force that took Wyndham's camp paid us a visit. About eight miles from this is the river Betwa. Well, one night, to our great surprise, we were turned out and marched to the river, bivouacked there, and came back in the morning, cursing the general for what we thought was all humbug. But it appears that he had reconnoitred the enemy and found them too strong, so back we came to camp. At night, out we were again, all drawn up in line, and sure enough, at the first dawn of day, there were the enemy as cock-a-hoop as possible—all proper, regiments, guns, infantry, just like a big parade. Well, we had a good pounding match for half an hour, and then Need's troop was ordered to charge on the extreme right, and a beautiful sight it was to see them riding into the rebels. Just after this the enemy were coming right atop of our left, and there we were with every description of the munitions of war playing upon us, round shot scratching over your head close enough almost to comb your hair. On they came : they were trying to outflank us ; then Prettijohn, the squadron leader, gave the word, and we were into them before you could say knife !

"We took five beautiful guns ; lost four men killed and eighteen wounded severely. About twenty horses killed.

"It is said the Nana was present. He might have been, but I think it was his brother. Whoever he was, he was a very misguided person, and he won't come to breakfast with us another day."

The writer was not aware that the second line, which was

covered by a belt of jungle, was led by Tantia Topee in person. He fired the jungle, and his men, part of the Gwalior contingent, retreated in perfect order. But the 14th Light Dragoons and the guns dashed through the belt of burning jungle, drove them over the Betwa, and took their twenty-five remaining guns.

The letter continues :

"I call ours a pretty good day's work, without food since breakfast on the previous morning, and a pretty average temperature, with a hot wind reminding one of a baker's oven. Don't you know the whiffs one gets now and then going along the streets ?

"April 10th.—About four days ago a most providential affair took place. The Ranee bolted and unluckily got away, but the whole day was spent in cutting up the fugitives. If we had had to storm the fort we should have lost more of the infantry. The 86th had sixty wounded and ten killed in taking the town. They compute that we have killed 5,000 or 6,000 of the enemy.

"The Ranee's palace is a fine place, and it is very pleasant to go and sit up there and take luncheon with the officer on guard, after being under canvas so long. However, they are all turned out now, as it is going to be made into a hospital. I have been all the morning hunting about for the place where our poor people were buried after the massacre, and I think I have found it. It is a curious thing that our left battery attack sent its shot and shell right over the place, and I found a splinter of shell which had burst over the enemy, had then rebounded and fallen on the very spot where they lie. The storming party, as they charged up the breach in the grey of the morning, must have passed close by the same spot. Perhaps the ghosts of our murdered people heard the tramp of their avengers."

The subaltern was ordered to see that the property of our murdered countrymen was burnt, as a quantity of clothing and other things were scattered all about the place. There was hardly a house in Jhansi which did not contain some article of English plunder. The skirts of the ladies' dresses had been taken to make turbans, but the rest of the clothing had been thrown away and treated with contumely. These relics were burnt, and in collecting them even hard old veterans were greatly moved.

A few things were brought to England and are in my possession—a blue ribbon, a handkerchief, a baby's cap blackened

with gunpowder, a baby's white silk shoe ; the little foot had outgrown it, and the silk had been neatly cut just below the instep .

Mrs. Skeine's desk was found ; it could not be carried on the line of march by a subaltern who had reduced his effects to the narrowest limits. It was therefore committed to the flames.

There is reason to believe that Major Skeine defended the fort to the last, while Mrs. Skeine reloaded the rifles ; and that when the enemy had so nearly reached them as to render further resistance impossible he shot his brave wife rather than let her fall into their cruel hands, and took his own life the next moment. It was the remembrance of such things that steeled the hearts of our soldiers against the sepoys ; but neither the desperate resistance they encountered at Jhansi, nor the evidence of a cowardly slaughter which they saw around them, made them forget that civilized nations do not war with the defenceless. The troops were seen sharing their rations with the starving women and children ; and Sir Hugh ordered that those who were destitute should be fed out of the prize grain.

When Jhansi had fallen the general stormed Kunch and defeated the rebels in that neighbourhood. They took the road to Calpee ; but Sir Hugh sent after them the cavalry, who, led by Major Prettijohn, pursued them for miles. They then took up a formidable position at Calpee, protected by labyrinths of ravines impossible for cavalry or artillery.

I learn from a letter of that date, " We could not get at them. No sooner had we got into camp and sat down to breakfast than ' Boots and saddles ! ' would sound, and out we were for the day, with nothing to do but to sit on our horses and watch the enemy's spent balls as they ricocheted over our heads. Many a man was struck down by the sun ; one morning, out of 150 of the 88th, eighty were so struck."

On the 21st, Sir Hugh made his attack. The battle that ensued was most hotly contested. At one time the " thin red line " began to waver, and the rebels pressed on with loud yells ; the British falling back on the field guns and mortar battery.

Then Brigadier Stuart, dismounting, placed himself beside the guns, and bade the gunners fight for their lives. The sepoys had advanced within twenty yards of the battery when the arrival of the camel corps saved the day, and turned a possible defeat into a glorious victory.

Thus the first part of Sir Hugh's dashing Indian campaign was brought to a close, and he resigned his command, applying for leave under medical certificate, when the news reached him that Tantia Topee and the Ranee of Jhansi had joined their forces; also that Sindia had marched to meet them at the head of 6,000 infantry, 1,500 cavalry and his own body-guard, but was suddenly deserted by his troops, and fled without drawing rein to Agra.

Finding there was still work for him to do, Sir Hugh went in the direction of Gwalior, and defeated the rebels at Morar. On the following morning at Kotah-ki-serai there was a severe contest, in which the Ranee of Jhansi was killed, fighting to the last in the garb of a horse-soldier.

She had escaped from Jhansi in male attire, riding a grey horse and attended by four followers. She was seen and hotly pursued, but got away. It was well for her we did not take her prisoner, for her proud heart would have broken in captivity or exile, and could she have chosen, she would have asked either to reign as Ranee, or to die sword in hand. Mahratta by birth and of a royal and warlike line, she was every inch a queen; but having a complaint against the British Government, who had compelled her to pay the debt her deceased husband owed them, and had also forbidden her to adopt an heir, a proceeding which would have entitled her to reign as regent, "she flung her angry heart and passionate nature," says Sir Edwin Arnold, "into the scale against us, giving more trouble to the British arms, before she fell dead on the field of battle, than many of the boldest rebel chieftains."

"I too was in India," continues Sir Edwin, "in those troubled days, and I have often heard Sir Hugh Rose talk about the brave and beautiful princess who gave his column so much hard work through those fierce and fiery battles in the north-west."*

On the 20th of June Sir Hugh captured Gwalior, and on the 21st Napier attacked and defeated the rebels, who had mustered 12,000 strong, and took from them twenty-five guns and all their ammunition, tents, carts and baggage. Having restored Sindia to his capital, Sir Hugh resigned his command, and proceeded, covered with laurels, to Bombay.

* See preface to "The Rani of Jhansi," a play.

The sub. naturally thought the war was over, and had visions of going home with his regiment. "You don't know," he wrote, "what a nice place England is till you leave it. Sindia has offered to give us a star in recognition of our retaking Gwalior for him. We have asked leave of the Governor-General to wear it. I hope we shall get it, it will be so uncommon: a star with his crest, a cobra in the middle, and 'Gwalior' across it."

It was not likely that the Government could consent to this decoration. The Nizam and other chiefs might have wished to present a similar medal to the troops who had fought for them, and a field for jealousy would have been opened by any refusal. Sir Robert Napier succeeded Sir Hugh Rose in command of the column, and Tantia Topee again took the field. He was continually defeated, and as constantly reappeared at the head of a small following. This recurred some ten or twelve times, and the 14th Light Dragoons were kept perpetually on the alert by his sudden attacks. They frequently slept beside their horses, the bridles fastened to their wrists; and so broken was their rest, that one, at least, used to fall asleep as he rode.

After the most romantic exploits and escapes Tantia was at last betrayed by a false friend, was tried, condemned and hanged.

The column was accorded an ovation on their return to Bombay, and Sir Hugh received it with ten thousand welcomes.

He himself received the thanks of Parliament, and was made a G.C.B. In 1860 he was appointed commander-in-chief in India, and in 1866 was raised to the peerage as Baron Strathnairn.

FRANCES DEW.

Crossed at Right Angles.

A STORY.

By S. J. DOUGLAS.

CHAPTER X.

IT was Sunday evening, the time when conversation languishes, and an inclination to sleep reigns supreme.

Gervase roused himself from a comfortable doze before the smoking-room fire, and stretched himself luxuriously. He had been only half asleep, watching the redness of the fire through half-closed eyelids, while pleasant thoughts meandered gently through his brain. He had a clear conscience, for he considered that he had done his duty nobly in refraining from Miss Aylmer's company several times during the last two days when he had been much inclined to enjoy it. True, he had been her companion in the Sunday afternoon walk, but that had been unavoidable. Chance had placed him near her, and he could not in common civility forsake her. How charming she had been! What a rich colour the wind had brought into her cheeks, and how it had ruffled her hair and blown her curls into her eyes! His own lips relaxed into a smile as he remembered her laughing lips, curled back showing a row of little white teeth, her big eyes dancing with fun as she looked up at him sideways to see the effect of some mischievous, tantalizing speech. And then the changeful face had grown pathetically grave and wistful as they spoke of graver things. He remembered the thrill in her low voice as some hidden chord was touched; he recalled the sympathy that had been plainly written on her expressive face as he spoke of his dead friend, whom he had not mentioned to any one since his sudden death, three years ago. He was glad he had spoken to her about him. It had drawn them closer together.

But she was not sentimental. He remembered how aggravatingly she had stopped him just when—what was he going to have said?—when they were sitting on the bench in the pine wood, overlooking the famous view of the valley. She called his attention to it suddenly as he was speaking of some-

thing else, and he had been too much annoyed at the interruption to admire it. "Look at that beautiful streak of red light in the west," she had said, "with the knot of Scotch firs against it."

They had walked on after that, watching the peaceful sky, while he idly puffed his cigarette. The smoking-room fire shed a warm glow over his limbs, and he sank into a lethargy of content. Gertrude! Gertrude! sweet, womanly Gertrude, with her dark, passionate eyes, her low voice, her full, slender figure, meet to be embraced by arm of man. He fell into a long, pleasant dream. He was rudely awakened by the entrance of Bertie Herries. The noise of the opening door and of his footsteps sounded startlingly loud as they broke in upon the warm stillness of the firelit smoking-room. Gervase roused himself reluctantly and looked at the clock. Nearly seven o'clock, and dinner was not till eight. He was disinclined to talk to young Herries, and he knew that the other men would shortly arrive from the billiard-room. He determined to go to his own room and read a book till it was time to dress for dinner. There was a well-used green volume of Tennyson, belonging to Mr. Adare, on the bookshelf. Gervase took it out, and proceeded leisurely upstairs to his own room.

At the turn to the drawing-room he paused irresolutely. *She* would be there, reading probably. Why should he not read in the same room with her?

Prudence conquered, and with an effort, but an exceedingly self-satisfied, virtuous conscience, he turned down the passage to his own room.

On the way, he went to say good-night to his nieces.

As he opened the nursery door he heard a voice that sent a thrill through him—*her* voice. He had been trying to avoid her, and Providence had guided his steps into her very presence. He looked over the screen. She was sitting by the fire, with Cherub and Seraph both in her lap. Their little faces were turned up to hers; their lovely eyes were drinking in every word of the story she was telling them. She stopped abruptly when she saw him, but the children were too much engrossed to permit any interruption.

"Go on; go on," they said imperiously.

"If you are going to stay, sit down and be quiet, Uncle Gervase," said Seraph. "Kate is telling us such a lovely story.

Go on, Kate, go on. 'The princess turned to the dwarf;' what did she say?"

"The story is nearly finished now, Seraph," said Gertrude. "There isn't much more to tell."

"Well, go on, go on," urged the children with one voice, emphasizing their request with jerks of their bodies.

"Well," said Gertrude, while Gervase sat down in the opposite corner of the well-worn sofa, and settled himself with a sense of deserved enjoyment, "the princess said to the dwarf, 'You may have all the treasure, if you will only tell me which way the white stag went,' and the dwarf grinned at her, showing all his yellow teeth, and his little eyes twinkled as he said, pointing to the great heap of gold and jewels, 'You will give me all this, the treasure that was lost so long, for which the prince risked his life for your sake—you will give it all to me just to tell you which way the white stag went?'"

"'Yes, yes,' said the princess, for she was so afraid the hunters would kill the stag.

"'Very well,' said the dwarf, and he grinned horribly.

"The gipsy Jane, who had been lying on the ground watching all the time, saw by his face that he was going to deceive the princess and take the treasure and tell her the wrong way to follow the stag. Gipsy Jane could not bear it. She loved the white stag so much that she did not care what the dwarf did to her afterwards. She sprang to her feet and said, 'I will tell you, princess. Do not listen to the wicked dwarf. The white stag went that way, toward the palace of the red king,' and she pointed through the forest. Then she snatched the ring from the dwarf's finger and gave it to the princess. 'Take that, quick; he cannot harm you without it,' and the princess put it on her finger and turned round three times and wished, and she found herself right out of the wood and in a beautiful green meadow. And there was the white stag, lying by the river, and his branching antlers shone in the sun like silver. Then the princess put the ring on her finger again, and turned round three times and wished, and lo and behold, the white stag was changed back again to the prince, and he came walking knee-deep through the meadow grass and flowers to the princess, and he thanked her, and took both her hands, and called her his beautiful bride. And they were married next day, and lived happily ever after."

"And what became of Gipsy Jane?" inquired the children.

"Oh, the dwarf was so angry with her, he turned her into a toad."

"Oh, what a nasty, horrid ending!" said Cherub, pouting. "I don't like that ending. Did she always stay a toad?"

"No; she was changed into a gipsy again afterwards, and married the black gipsy. But that is another story."

"I like the beginning part of the story best," said Seraph. "I wish poor Gipsy Jane hadn't been turned into a toad. She was so nice, nicer than the princess. Uncle Gervase, *you* tell us a story now."

"Yes, yes, Uncle Gervase, *you* tell us one now," shouted Cherub, and both children transferred themselves bodily from Gertrude's lap to his, and began dancing up and down on his knee.

"Sit still, you little wretches," he said. "I'm not going to tell you a story."

"Oh, do, do, do!" they vociferated. "Kate, Kate, tell him he must."

"He won't do what I tell him," said Gertrude.

"Oh, yes, he will; won't you, Uncle Gervase?"

"Well, listen to me," said Gervase; "I'll tell you a short story, but you *must* sit still. Once upon a time there was a little girl; she was a good little girl, but sometimes she was naughty."

Seraph wriggled and heaved a sigh.

"This is going to be a stupid story," she said.

"Don't interrupt," said Gervase. "Well, this little girl saw a plum growing on a wall. It wasn't a very nice plum, because there was a wasp inside eating out all the best part, but the little girl couldn't see that. Well, she wanted to have that plum, and every day she watched it growing ripe, but she could not reach it. One day the gardener saw her looking at it, and he said she might have it when it fell at her feet. He meant to pick it next day, just before it was ready to fall. But what do you think happened? When he had gone away, the plum had heard, and it liked the little girl, and it fell right down at her feet. She picked it up and looked at it, and then she threw it away from her as hard as she could, right into a bed of nettles. Because, you see, she was so angry and disappointed that it was a bad plum after all."

"How silly!" said Seraph contemptuously.

"Uncle Gervase, that's a very stupid story," said Cherub calmly.

"Why didn't she eat the good part?" said Seraph.

"Well, you see, she was the kind of little girl who liked to have everything of the very best. Nothing but perfection would do for her."

"Perhaps she was frightened that the wasp would sting her," suggested Cherub. "Now tell us another."

"Another! Why, it's time for you to go to bed."

"No, it isn't!" she said, pillowing her golden head on his shoulder. "Nurse will come soon enough, you bet."

"Who taught you that vulgar expression, Seraph?"

"I heard you say it yourself, Uncle Gervase. Uncle Gervase" she went on without a pause, stroking his chin with her soft little hand, "why aren't you all prickly, like papa? Papa is just like a scrubbing-brush. It does scratch so when he kisses you."

Gervase laughed.

"Nobody ever kisses me, Cherub, so it doesn't matter."

"Oh, yes, they do," said Cherub. "I love kissing you, and so does Seraph. Don't you, Seraph?"

"Yes," grunted Seraph, who was fast falling asleep on Gertrude's shoulder.

"You're so pretty, Uncle Gervase," said Cherub, relentlessly pursuing her own line of thought. "Your nose is straight, like mamma's, not like Mr. Bertie's. Do you know what Seraph said Mr. Bertie's nose was like? She said it was like the spout of our milk-jug, that we have at nursery tea."

"That was very discerning of Seraph," said Gervase gravely.

Cherub heaved a deep sigh and nestled closer to him.

"When I'm grown up I'll marry a man just like you, Uncle Gervase."

"You flatter me, Cherub. But won't you have to wait till you are asked?"

"Oh no, 'cause I'll love him so. If you wasn't my uncle I'd marry you. Can't uncles *never* marry their nieces?"

"I am afraid not, Cherub. Besides, you don't consult me. How do you know I am not engaged already?"

"What's engaged? Going to be married?"

"Yes."

"Oh, are you really, Uncle Gervase? May Seraph and me be your bridesmaids? And will you give us little blue locket like Cousin George gave us?"

"That depends on my bride. She chooses the bridesmaids."

"Who is she, Uncle Gervase?"

"Ah, that I can't tell you, Cherub."

"Is she nice?"

"Of course."

Cherub sat up, and was about to put him through a close catechism, when the entrance of Nurse frustrated her intentions. She was too sleepy to object to go to bed.

"You'll tell me to-morrow, won't you, Uncle Gervase?" she said, with her heavily fringed lids drooping over her eyes. "Give me a nice, nice kiss now," she added, winding her arms round his neck. He kissed her soft, peach-like cheek gently and set her down on the floor.

"Me now!" said Seraph, stretching out her arm.

"And me again! Just one more, darling," said Seraph sleepily, but persistently, while the nurse stood by.

Gervase laughed, but picked her up in his arms and kissed her again.

"There now," he said, "I hope you're content."

"*Quite, quite* content," said the tiny girl drowsily as she was carried off.

"What are you thinking of?" said Gervase to Gertrude as he closed the nursery door behind him. "Something wicked, I can see, by those dancing eyes of yours."

"Would you like to know?" said Gertrude mischievously. They were standing at the corner of the passage, where they must part to go to their rooms.

She backed away from him.

"I was wishing I was as young as Cherub again," she said with a rush; and before he had time to reply she had vanished.

"Now what did she mean?" said Gervase to himself.

CHAPTER XI.

GERVASE went down to dinner that Sunday night with one of the new arrivals, a Miss Alston, a bright, childish girl, with high-arched eyebrows, that gave an expression of perpetual surprise to her innocent face. Long before dinner was over, she decided

in her own mind that Mr. Delvin was quite the most odious, stuck-up, stupid man she had ever met. He was so absent-minded, and either left her remarks unanswered, or laughed when she had said nothing funny. After dinner he found Gertrude walled up in an impenetrable corner, whither all his efforts were powerless to transport him. When he had scaled the rampart of chairs and sofas that hemmed her in, he found his brother-in-law's substantial person firmly rooted to the end of the sofa where she sat.

He retired to a distant chair in a bad temper, and made scant response to the animated flow of chatter directed at him by the elder Miss Alston, who, being of a talkative disposition, fortunately did not notice his abstraction.

He secretly watched the clock till ten o'clock should strike, for he was resolved that, in the sort of general post which an adjournment to prayers would occasion, nothing should prevent him from taking up a position near Gertrude.

In the meantime, he watched her from under his eyelids, and grew more and more sentimental, and also distinctly savage when he noticed that Bertie Herries' conversation seemed to amuse her. His spirits rose as ten o'clock approached. He surprised Miss Alston by suddenly sitting up and responding with great animation, if with some incoherence, to her remarks.

At ten o'clock a nervous chill descended upon the company. Mr. Adare was abstracted and restless, as if he were rehearsing a speech. A solemn hush gradually absorbed the last remnants of conversation. When the butler appeared with solemn face, bowed gravely, and murmured something, and opened the wide double doors with reverential pomp, a shiver of expectancy ran through the frames of all present. With grave faces, they filed out of the drawing-room, preceded by Lady Fanny, down the long corridor to the dining-room, where a solemn regiment of black-gowned maids lined the walls, flanked at one end by a row of stablemen and footmen, awkwardly conscious of their hands. The guests took their places; Mr. Adare seated himself at the head of the long, empty table, which looked unfamiliar in an undress of grey flannel; there was an awful pause while the butler shut the door, and stepped reverentially to his place on the last bench, and then prayer began.

Gervase heard Miles' voice, like the sea beating on the shore in

the far distance ; he kept his eyes fixed sideways on the tip of a little shoe and a fold of black stuff which was all he could see of Gertrude, past several restless pairs of crossed legs in evening trousers exhibiting a variety of taste in the matter of silk socks. Then he was conscious of a movement, like the sudden rustling of a meeting rising to disperse, and became aware that the congregation was kneeling down and hiding its faces decorously behind the padded red-leather backs of its chairs. He mechanically did the same, and had an excellent opportunity for speculating on the various sizes in boots taken by the footmen, judging from the soles of their feet. When prayers were over he walked out among the other men, following the ladies, while the row of domestics watched their departure with respectful attention. He was determined to proceed at once to Gertrude's side. To his disgust, he found his sister marshalling the ladies to bed. Candles were lit and handed round, a solemn and universal handshaking took place, and, with the chill of prayers still hanging over them, the ladies exchanged good-nights, and disappeared in different directions.

His sister had taken Gertrude affectionately by the arm, and kept her glued to her side, with innocent persistence.

Gervase consoled himself with the thought of "to-morrow." But when to-morrow came, matters did not mend. Gervase could not understand how it was that something or some one incessantly intervened to keep him apart from Gertrude.

At breakfast the young Miss Alston innocently sat down in the place next her. After breakfast she was carried off by Fanny on some pretence of writing letters ; later on she was sent out for a drive with the Miss Alstons.

Gervase was quite savage by luncheon-time, and when he again found himself separated from her by the whole length of the table his discomfiture was complete. He helped himself to an enormous plateful of pressed beef, and was silent.

He was half-way through it when he became aware that a proposal for the evening's amusement was being discussed. Captain Taylor suggested the whole party should repair by train to G——, the nearest large town, where a very good pantomime was attracting large houses. Every one except Gervase was delighted with the idea. Lady Fanny, always ready for anything that promised a little amusement, summarily

disposed of every objection in the matter of carriages, trains, dinner, that her husband raised, and, supported by the vociferous voices of the Miss Alstons, carried the point, and decided to go. Gervase's was the only dissenting voice. "What on earth did they want to go two hours' journey in the train to see a rotten pantomime for? It was unheard-of imbecility."

"Very well, then, you needn't go," said Lady Fanny. "We shall be just right without you—four ladies and four men. You can stop at home and keep Miles company."

After lunch Gervase went straight up to Gertrude. The youngest Miss Alston, was hanging on her arm, but he was too desperate to heed her. "Are you going this ridiculous expedition?" he asked.

"Yes, I suppose so," Gertrude said. She was thinking how intensely dull it would be if he did not come.

"Do you want to go?"

"Yes, I daresay it will be great fun," she said doubtfully.

"Fun? Of course it will be!" exclaimed Miss Alston. "Don't you love a pantomime? Why, I think the worse it is, the more amusing it is. You ought to come, Mr. Delvin. The Waltons were there last week, and they said it was simply killing."

"Are you going?" said Gervase to Gertrude.

"Yes."

"Very well, then, I'll go too."

Lady Fanny had been so pleased with her management, which she thought would effectually keep Gervase and Gertrude apart for the rest of the day, that her horror was proportionate when she came down to the hall, in a becoming fur tippet, to find her brother among those who were coated and hatted ready for the start.

"Gervase!" she exclaimed, stopping short, "are you coming?"

"I am, fair sister. I have changed my mind since Miss Alston told me that this pantomime is so killingly funny, I shall die of laughing."

He was in provokingly high spirits and sublimely unconscious of the annoyance he was causing in more than one breast. Again Miss Alston was moved to register a heartfelt conviction that he was the most abominable man she had ever met.

Lady Fanny rushed to her husband.

"Miles," she panted, in a frantic whisper, "he is going after all! What is to be done?"

Mr. Adare shrugged his shoulders.

"There's nothing to be done. A wilful man must have his way."

"I won't be outwitted," said Lady Fanny, stamping her foot. "Just as I thought I had managed so beautifully, too! I'll spoil their little game yet! They shan't have a moment's peace, as sure as my name is Frances Adare."

She sternly directed Gertrude to get into the omnibus first, the Alstons to follow, and then got in herself, thus securely hedging Gertrude out of the way. When they came to the station she executed the same manœuvre in getting into the train, but this time Gervase saw through her manœuvre, and set himself to outwit her. A pitched battle was secretly waged between the brother and sister during the rest of the expedition.

When they got to G——, Lady Fanny beckoned young Mr. Davies aside, and bade him, in a theatrical whisper, take charge of Miss Aylmer and stick to her at all costs.

"Don't leave her side for a single moment," said Lady Fanny. "Do you understand? Walk with her on the way to the theatre, and sit beside her when you get there. Don't leave her for a minute whatever happens. Do you hear?"

The youth, who was one of the new arrivals, was extremely mystified, but expressed his readiness to obey.

The consequence was, that Gertrude walked through the streets to the theatre between two jealous guardians, who stuck to her on either side as closely as policemen escorting a prisoner. At the theatre Lady Fanny's deputy gained the advantage, and, obedient to orders, succeeded in penning his charge securely into a corner between Miss Alston and the wall of the box, while he placed his own chair so as to cut off all approach from the rear.

In the interval between the acts Gervase made a determined attack. He suggested to Mr. Davies so forcibly the advisability of leaving the box to smoke a quiet cigarette, that the young man was obliged to comply. He then routed Miss Alston from her post by declaring that there was such a draught, she would certainly have a crick in her neck if she sat any longer in that particular chair, and finally seated himself, with a defiant glance

at his sister, just behind Gertrude, where he could not possibly see more than a corner of the stage.

"You can't see there, Gervase," said Lady Fanny, with a last despairing effort.

"Oh yes, I can, thank you," he said coolly. "I have a splendid view behind the wings. The fat woman in the tights is threatening to fight somebody."

Lady Fanny looked daggers at him, but he had the upper hand at present.

Gertrude was very quiet. Lady Fanny's manœuvres were perfectly transparent, and Gertrude was amused, though she felt that she had more cause for sorrow.

This was the last day that Gervase would cause his friends any alarm, she reflected. The day after to-morrow would find her far enough away from him, and from them all.

She might at least be allowed to enjoy herself during the short time that remained. She could not but feel triumphant when Gervase found his way to her side, in the teeth of all obstacles.

The pantomime seemed to her unutterably tedious and vulgar, but her opinion was shared only by Gervase.

When the performance was over, there was a rush and a crowd to the door. The party were not able to keep together, though Lady Fanny was perpetually standing on tiptoe, grasping Captain Taylor's arm, to keep an eye on her party. She was relieved to see that the faithful Davies was in close attendance on Gertrude, so close, in fact, that a stiff feather in her hat threatened to put out his eye every time she moved her head.

When they oozed out into the street it was quite dark, and there were many people walking on the pavements, but it was such a short way to the station that every one declared they would walk.

Lady Fanny kilted up her skirts and led the way, escorted by Captain Taylor and satisfied that her charges were following in good order. The streets were so full of people that the ladies were considerably jostled. It was almost impossible to walk two abreast, quite impossible, as Mr. Davies presently found, to walk three abreast.

"Take care," said Gervase, quickly catching hold of Gertrude's arm as a rough man, smelling strongly of whisky, reeled against her, and nearly knocked her into the gutter. "Clumsy brute!" he added angrily. "Are you hurt?"

"No," said Gertrude.

"Wait a minute. Stand in this doorway for half a second, while I light a cigarette, will you?"

She stepped aside into the doorway and watched him as he struck a light, shading it with his hand, and lit a cigarette.

"There," he said, "come along now."

They were alone at last. Mr. Davies had walked on placidly for some time beside a strange female, under the impression that she was Gertrude, and on finding out his mistake it was too late to go back. All traces of his charge were lost in the crowd. With an uneasy conscience, he hurried after the others, and found them on the platform waiting for the train.

"Where is Miss Aylmer?" asked Lady Fanny sharply.

"There were such a lot of people, I got separated from her," he said guiltily, "but she is all right. She is with your brother."

"You donkey!" said Lady Fanny between her teeth. Luckily he did not hear what she said.

"Take seats! Take seats!" came the cry, and the ticket-collector went round, the porters began to bang the doors, and the engine gave a shrill premonitory whistle.

"Good heavens! They are going to miss the train!" screamed Lady Fanny. "Guard! guard! You mustn't go yet! There are a lady and gentleman coming! You *must* wait! Oh, good gracious, what is to be done? That fool Gervase! It's really too bad!"

Captain Taylor rushed up the platform to see if they were coming, but there were no signs. The official grew impatient.

"Now, madam, take your seat, if you please! We can't wait. We're late already."

"No, no, I won't go without them!" said Lady Fanny excitedly.

"Get in; get in! Make way there! Now then, madam, *if you please!*"

"Perhaps they are in another part of the train," said Mr. Davies.

"They may be at the very end; I hadn't time to go all the way back," said Captain Taylor.

"Oh dear! oh dear! It's too awful," cried Lady Fanny hysterically. "We must wait. Guard, guard, I'll report you if you don't wait. Where is the station-master? Oh, heavens, we're off!"

She sank into her seat, almost in tears.

"I think I see somebody running," said Mr. Davies, with his body half-way out of the window. "Yes, yes, it's them! I see them! They're running; they're too late!"

"Let me see; let me see," said Lady Fanny, elbowing him out of the way, but he had just time to pull her back unceremoniously as the train plunged into a tunnel, but not before the draught whisked her hat off her head.

"I'll never forgive them, never!" said Lady Fanny. "And my Paris hat is gone!"

The united efforts of the party at length sufficed to pacify her to some extent, and she was even able to laugh at the sight of her own pretty face and fair hair, in the looking-glass under the rack, with Captain Taylor's large silk handkerchief tied over her head instead of a hat.

She might have forgiven Gervase and Gertrude if she could have known how bitterly they both repented their dawdling pace, which had caused them to miss the train.

They stood looking blankly at each other. They both realized the awkwardness of their position. Gertrude could have cried as the hideousness of this fresh complication burst upon her with full force. Gervase was merely angry. He stormed at the railway officials; he declared there must be another train; he attributed the loss of the train to every one's negligence and stupidity but his own.

"Go and wait in the ladies' room, while I make inquiries," he said to Gertrude, and when he had escorted her there, he went and made himself so disagreeable and unreasonable, that very soon every official at the station was ready to murder him.

It was no use. There was not another train to take them back till six o'clock the next morning. Gervase went back to Gertrude. He found her sitting miserably on a hard horsehair sofa, resting her elbows on the mahogany table, and staring with tearful eyes at a dirty tract. She had never in her life felt so unutterably hopeless and forlorn, though *why* she could not have explained in a few words. All she knew was, that circumstances were combining to take Gervase further and further away from her. The conviction had been growing on her all day as Lady Fanny's coldness and her efforts to separate the pair became plainer. Missing the train was the last straw, for though it left her alone with Gervase, alone in a great, bustling city,

where in the dark they might pass together unperceived, she knew that the very fact widened the gulf between them.

"Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save them that are lost," she saw printed in large letters on the page before her.

For an instant a sensation of wild joy overwhelmed her, as the thought flashed through her brain that she was alone with Gervase—alone, alone, as if she had been his wife ; as if he had been her husband, her tall, strong, handsome husband, whom she loved.

"God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son——"

Tears were falling on the cheap paper and blurring the ink.

Other girls had been in this station at night, with the porters bustling to and fro, the lamp flaring out of the dark, luggage trucks trundling, engines hissing. They had waited for their husbands perhaps in this very dingy room, with its horsehair and mahogany furniture, its cheaply printed texts, its lugubrious caretaker sniffing over a smouldering fire. They had been in love too, or perhaps marriage had mellowed the first passion into the hidden true affection, and they could afford to wait patiently, confident that *he* would soon return to take them to some more comfortable spot for the night.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal ; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where——"

But no. Hers was a very different lot from that of those patient wives. Never, never would she marry the man she loved. She was alone with him now, for the last time. The cup of bliss was so close, so close to her lips. It seemed as if she had but to stretch out her hand and take it, but in reality it was out of her reach.

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

The big printed words conveyed no meaning to her brain.

There were women in the world who, alone with the man they loved, would—would—God, what would they *not* do ? She was ashamed the moment the thought crossed her mind.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us——"

Misery could develop to no more poignant dimensions. She

CROSSED AT 2.15

was sitting there, dazed in spirit and
came back.

The first glance at his face
clouded with irritation, showed
already drifted. While she
the realms of imagination
only with the practical aspect.

"There is no train
addressing her impersonally
frowning his forehead.
hotel for the night."

She rose submissively
and downcast eyes his
sense of the awkwardness
tion. It pressed upon
nothing else. Yet as
busy station his heart
tired she was, and pale
train had gone without
till next morning. He
the whole world was

It was twelve o'clock
lighted hall of the
ing. Through the
belated travellers
were yawning as they

"We had better have
had booked two rooms

He was becoming
trude's pale, tired face

"You do look
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"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us——"

Misery could develop to no more poignant dimensions. She

was sitting there, dazed in spirit and wearied in body, when he came back.

The first glance at his face, preoccupied with annoyance and clouded with irritation, showed her at once how far he had already drifted. While she, like a fool, had been agonizing in the realms of imagination, he had, manlike, been concerned only with the practical aspect of the situation.

"There is no train till six to-morrow morning," he said, addressing her impersonally, with the traces of annoyance still furrowing his forehead. "There is nothing for it but to go to the hotel for the night."

She rose submissively, and as he caught sight of her pale face and downcast eyes his irritation was further aggravated. His sense of the awkwardness of their position needed no augmentation. It pressed upon him so heavily that he could think of nothing else. Yet as she walked beside him across the great, busy station his heart was touched. Poor little thing! How tired she was, and pale! It was really too preposterous that the train had gone without them, and that there should be no other till next morning. He was unreasonably angry, convinced that the whole world was conspiring against his convenience.

It was twelve o'clock when they stepped into the brilliantly lighted hall of the hotel, and the business of the day was slackening. Through the half-open door of the dining-room only two belated travellers were to be seen at the tables, and the waiters were yawning as they gossiped sleepily with the barmaids.

"We had better have something to eat," said Gervase when he had booked two rooms.

He was becoming more resigned to the situation, and Gertrude's pale, tired face struck him with a sense of remorse.

"You *do* look tired," he said, in a low voice. "But you will be better when you have had something to eat."

He led the way to a little table in the dining-room and ordered hot soup.

"The others are nearly home by this time," he said cheerfully when the waiter had gone. "How furious they will be with us."

She smiled faintly in response to his laugh.

"I am sure I don't care," he said. "It was our misfortune, not our fault."

He chatted on carelessly while they ate.

"There now," he said when she had eaten some soup, "you look better already. The colour is coming back to your face."

It came back with a rush as she met his eyes.

He had quite regained his usual equable spirits. As he sat opposite her and exerted himself to make her talk he grew excited. After all, what was there wrong, or even awkward, in their being alone together? It had not been of their own seeking. As the colour came back to her cheeks, and the light to her eyes, he forgot his irritation. She seemed more lovable than ever in this subdued, wistful mood. He longed to see the light of passion flash in her heavy eyes, but he restrained himself. She must be made to feel as calm and secure under his protection as if he had been her brother.

Only wait till to-morrow, till they were safely back at Blackwaters!

He followed her out of the dining-room when she said she would go to bed, and procured a candle for her and a chambermaid to show her the way.

Then they shook hands at the foot of the stairs gravely, under the curious eyes of the maid and the waiter, but as their eyes and their hands met and held each other for a single moment something passed between them which no eye saw and no poet has named, something so subtle, that it is invisible and unnamable, and yet that sends flame raging through the veins, that intoxicates the brain, that causes the soul to reel with such ineffable joy, that comes only once in a lifetime.

(To be continued.)

MAR 31 1915